

DATE DUE

DEMCO 38-296



A CENTURY OF FASHION









PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH, WEARING THE FAMOUS VELVET GOWN EMBROIDERED WITH EYES AND EARS

A CENTURY OF FASHION

.

JEAN PHILIPPE WORTH

TRANSLATED BY RUTH SCOTT MILLER

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
BOSTON 1 9 2 8

TT505.W6 A35 1928 Worth, Jean Phillippe, 1856-1926. A century of fashion,

COPYRIGHT, 1927, 1928, BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

All rights reserved · Published October, 1928

646 W93c

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOREWORD



It was the intention of Jean Philippe Worth in writing this book merely to leave a record of his own and his father's part in the development of fashion during the last century without any mention of his own private life or any such gossip of his customers as is designated by Parisians as *portierisme*. In this day of confessional biography this reticence is distinctly refreshing.

This leading *couturier* of his time had his own creed in regard to dressmaking and that was that there must be a time, a place, an age and a fitness for all modes and he considered the greatest flaw in modern fashion is that it does not hold these tenets.

The House of Worth sponsored many innovations, from the crinoline to the famous straight-front, but M. Worth admitted to me that he did not believe the fashion invariably enhanced feminine beauty and that he sometimes introduced extreme modes under duress.

[v]





Monsieur Worth was a man of great dignity, an artist and a connoisseur of rare and beautiful things. His house in the Rue Emilé Deschanel, where I talked with him regarding this book, was filled with collections of furniture and pictures and china. J. P. Morgan, who brought the women of his family to the House of Worth for their clothes and was himself a friend of Monsieur Worth, desired to buy it and its contents outright.

Like many sensitive intuitive souls, it pleased Monsieur Worth to believe that his aspect was intimidating, his features hard, his gaze through his large spectacles frightening and that every one from the Duchess to the midinette quailed at his approach. The truth was that from the blind, whom he supported, to the great ladies for whom he designed his marvellous gowns, he was beloved as one in whom a great deal "of the good child" had never died.

As a youth he had thought to be a painter and though he deserted the canvas and paintbrushes, all his life he made pictures of fabrics and laces and jewels. Each creation was as truly a work of art as though it were drawn and fixed in color instead of pliable and shimmering materials. It is to be regretted that he did not live to see this book — his last and newest

FOREWORD

venture — completed. He died in December, 1926, while it was still in process of translation, and as he passed the sun over Paris darkened — and the dramatic Parisians insisted that this eclipse was a symbol. Perhaps it was.

RUTH SCOTT MILLER

June 15, 1928



CONTENTS



FOREWORD · V

• I • THE LINCOLNSHIRE LAD • 3

· 11 ·

IN BUSINESS FOR HIMSELF · 21

: III ·

THE INFLUENCE OF EMPRESS EUGÉNIE · 39

· IV :

INVENTING A NEW CONCEIT · 55

. V .

FOUNDATION OF THE WORTH FORTUNE · 75

· VI ·

LADIES AND DEMIMONDAINES · 90

· VII ·

FANCY DRESS COSTUMES · 112

· VIII ·

DRESSES FOR FOREIGN COURTS · 133

· 1X ·

THE GENESIS OF A MODE · 145

 $\cdot x \cdot$

CELEBRITIES OF THE STAGE · 158

· XI ·

QUEENS AND THEIR WARDROBES · 180

· XII ·

THE AMBITION OF JEAN PHILIPPE WORTH · 215

[ix]





PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH
• Frontispiece •

THE GRANDMOTHER OF C. F. WORTH \cdot 6 \cdot

AS DRESSES WERE MADE AT THE TIME C. F. WORTH WENT INTO BUSINESS

• 7 •

EVENING FULL DRESSES, 1810
• 7 •

TYPE OF GOWN AT TIME BUSINESS OF WORTH WAS ESTABLISHED

• 14 •

THE STYLE C. F. WORTH LOVED
• 15 •

MME. C. F. WORTH AS A WIDOW • 20 •

MME. C. F. WORTH ABOUT 1860 • 20 •

MME. C. F. WORTH IN 1863 WITH HER TWO CHILDREN

· 20 ·

[xi]

MME. C. F. WORTH WITH AN ALMOST PRINCESS DRESS

· 20 ·

C. F. WORTH ABOUT 1864

· 21 ·

PRINCESS NARISKIN

· 26 ·

A COUNTRY OR TRAVELLING COSTUME

· 26 ·

MRS. HARTMANN

· 26 ·

THE SORT OF HAT WHICH WAS WORN WHEN RIDING

· 26 ·

DUCHESSE DE MORNY, 1863

· 27 ·

DUCHESSE DE MORNY AT HOME

• 27 •

DUCHESSE DE MORNY, TALKING TO HERSELF

· 27 ·

MRS. HENRY DE PAYNE

• 27 •

MISS VAN WART AS MARIE ANTOINETTE

• 34 •

DONNA FRANCA FLORIO

• 35 •

EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

· 46 ·

[xii]



DRESS MADE FOR EMPRESS EUGÉNIE AS PROSERPINE

• 47 •

COMTESSE J... DE C... IN A SECOND EMPIRE DRESS

• 56 •

MME. DE BENARDAKI

• 57 •

J. P. WORTH AS AN INDIAN RAJAH

· 64 ·

J. P. WORTH AS A SOLDIER IN 1877

· 65 ·

J. P. WORTH AS A "NEGATIVE" 65 ·

COMTESSE DE POURTALES

• 70 •

MARQUISE DE JAUCOURT
• 71 •

J. P. WORTH AS CAPULET • 80 •

J. P. WORTH AS THE SHAH OF PERSIA 80 •

MARQUISE DE MANZANEDO
• 81 •

J. P. WORTH ABOUT 1908
• 86 •

GASTON WORTH

· 86 ·

[xiii]



C. F. WORTH ABOUT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH · 87 ·

C. F. WORTH IN 1858

· 87 ·

DUCHESSE DE ROHAN

• 94 •

MARQUISE HERVÉ DE ST. DENIS

• 94 •

LADY DE GREY

• 95 •

MRS. ASQUITH

• 95 •

PRINCESSE MATHILDE

• 98 •

DUCHESSE DE MORNY

. 99 .

MARIE LOUISE DE MARCY

• 106 •

COMTESSE DE VILLENEUVE

• 107 •

LADY PAGET AS CLEOPATRA

· 112 ·

AN AMERICAN CUSTOMER WITH WONDERFUL PEARLS

· 113 ·

THE PEACOCK DRESS, MADE FOR

PRINCESSE DE SAGAN

· 120 ·

[xiv]

0

ILLUSTRATIONS



MRS. HENRY WHITE
• 124 •

LADY LISTER-KAYE
• 125 •

LADY RANDOLPH CHURCHILL
• 130 •

COUNTESS COLEBROOKE
• 131 •

CONSUELO, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH
• 136 •

QUEEN ALEXANDRA AND PAGES
• 137 •

FAMOUS UMBRELLA MADE FOR A
POTENTATE OF FAR EAST
• 142 •

ANOTHER VIEW OF FAMOUS UMBRELLA
• 142 •

TWO VIEWS OF A CLOAK MADE FOR A POTENTATE OF FAR EAST • 143 •

SPECIMEN OF "ALENÇON" DRESS

LADY PAGET IN A MEDIAEVAL COSTUME
• 151 •

MME. KATINKA-FEHRY
• 151 •

ADA REHAN
• 158 •

[xv]



MRS. JAMES BROWN POTTER AS JULIET \cdot 159 \cdot

LILY LANGTRY IN A TEAGOWN • 164 •

LILY LANGTRY ABOUT 1895
• 165 •

EMMA EAMES AS MARGUERITE
• 168 •

EMMA EAMES IN A CONCERT DRESS • 169 •

EMMA EAMES AS THE COUNTESS IN "LE NOZZE DI FIGARO" • 169 •

NELLIE MELBA AS VIOLETTA
• 172 •

COURT TRAIN MADE FOR MELBA TO WEAR
IN "LOHENGRIN"

• 173 •

MISS KATE BRICE IN A VELASQUEZ COSTUME
• 178 •

MME. DE JEANZÉ IN PRESENTATION DRESS
• 179 •

THE FASHION IN 1895
• 186 •

DONNA FRANCA FLORIO ABOUT 1900 • 187 •

SLIGHT MOURNING DRESS WORN BY
J. P. WORTH'S DAUGHTER ABOUT 1900

• 190 •

[xvi]

0

ILLUSTRATIONS



LADY CURZON

· 198 ·

LADY PAGET IN A TEAGOWN

· 199 ·

MRS. C... IN A FANCY COSTUME

· 206 ·

PRINCESS PALEY

· 212 ·

LADY TODD

· 213 ·

ELEANORA DUSE

· 216 ·

LADY WYNDHAM IN "CYRANO DE BERGERAC"

· 217 ·

MARCHESA CASATI REPRESENTING "LIGHT"

· 220 ·

NELLIE MELBA, 1904

· 221 ·

MISS PEARL WHITE REPRESENTING LA LÉGION

D'HONNEUR

• 224 •

MISS PEARL WHITE AS A DÉESSE HINDOO

• 224 •

MISS PEARL WHITE AS PIERRETTE

• 224 •

MRS. JAMES BROWN POTTER IN

"LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS"

· 225 ·

[xvii]



MRS. HOOKER AS "LA LIBERTÉ ÉCLAIRANT LE MONDE"

· 225 ·

MLLE. MARNAC IN ROMAN COSTUME
• 225 •

JEAN CHARLES WORTH
• 228 •

JACQUES WORTH . 228 ·

J. P. WORTH'S DAUGHTER ON HER SIXTEENTH BIRTHDAY
• 229 •

J. P. WORTH'S DAUGHTER IN A DINNER DRESS • 229 •

A CENTURY OF FASHION







THE LINCOLNSHIRE LAD



For More than sixty years I have been an interested spectator at a never-ending drama whose heroine is La Mode. When I first saw it, the lady who carries the burden of the play was on the stage as a naive seamstress. She knew satin as a kind of lustrine used to line candy boxes and cover buttons, but not as beauty to be crushed into flamboyant bows. Now that the Great Scene Shifter has his hand outstretched to lower what for me shall be the final curtain, she parades before the footlights, a capricious goddess. She is heedless of art, governed by chance, or more frequently, by what Edgar Allan Poe terms human — not to say feminine — perversity, whose most famous line is, "I must have something new!"

This drama and the industry of dressmaking that forms its theme are not yet a century old. It was not

() A CENTURY OF FASHION ()

until some time after the revolution in 1848 that people were filled with the desire for greater elegance of attire and their imagination aroused to the grace and beauty hidden in a bolt of cloth. That awakening was due to the *couturiers* abruptly imbuing their craft with the fresh life of new ideas and aspirations.

Prior to this, the change in styles from year to year was hardly perceptible. Sleeves and bodices and skirts ventured no new line or furbelow, and while a dress might wear out in the course of a decade, it never went out of fashion. But at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century not only the fashion in wearing apparel, but the very material of which it was made and the processes by which that material was manufactured were revolutionized. And this metamorphosis, if I may be permitted to say so not without pride, was brought about under the energetic and persevering direction and inspiration of my father, Charles Frederick Worth.

To tell in some detail the history of this despotic genius who was at once my kindly father and my adored master is the most adequate answer I know to that famous question, "How did you happen to become a couturier — you, who studied with Corot and might have been a painter?" For it is not enough to say I

() A CENTURY OF FASHION ()

adopted my profession because I loved my father, although it is quite true. My inclination and my still-born wish were to become a painter, a hidden ambition fostered doubtless by my studying with that great man responsible, among other masterpieces, for "The Dance of the Nymphs."

Charles Frederick Worth was born on November 13, 1826, at Bourne, in Lincolnshire, England. His father was a lawyer and his mother a gentlewoman, born a Quincy of Quincy. Unfortunately the father took his family responsibilities lightly, and it was not a great many years before he had reduced his wife and three children to penury by wasting his substance gambling. Of these three children, the eldest son fared best. Having reached manhood before his father had run through all the money, he had received an excellent education, which enabled him to become a lawyer, and had been given those finer advantages that in the early 1800's were accorded the boy brought up to be a gentleman. The daughter of the family died, and it was left to the younger son, Charles Frederick, to bear the consequences of his father's improvidence.

Charles Frederick was only eleven years old when he was confronted with the necessity of leaving school and earning his living. Those who knew him in later

() A CENTURY OF FASHION (

years and were fascinated by his charm and poise and brilliant conversational gifts, were hard put to it to believe that this man, whose knowledge of art and letters and beauty seemed limitless and whose flawless taste set the sartorial standard of the world, had had no schooling after his eleventh year and was practically self taught.

His first job, after he left school, was in a printing shop, a place his mother procured for him after she herself had swallowed her pride, had forgotten she had been brought up to be a gentlewoman — a lady was the old-fashioned word — and had become the house-keeper for some rich cousins of hers. My father, although he never thought of his own struggles and hard-driven boyhood, never got over this last humiliation to his mother, and never forgave my grandfather for permitting it to come to pass. And in after years, although there was nothing he did not do materially to help the profligate, he refused ever to meet or to see him.

When Charles Frederick had been in the printing shop a twelve-month he went to my grandmother and said, "Mother, I can't stand that place any longer. If I can't get away from it I shall die. I hate it. I hate the kind of work, the life, the whole business. I'm not



THE GRANDMOTHER OF C. F. WORTH IN THE TYPE OF DRESS PREVAILING ABOUT 1840



AS DRESSES WERE MADE AT THE TIME C. F. WORTH WENT INTO BUSINESS

A CENTURY OF FASHION (

learning anything, not getting anywhere. I never was intended to be a printer. Please let me leave it and go to London. Go into some shop, Lewis and Allenby's, or any place where I'll have a chance. Please."

My grandmother smiled a little wearily and said, "I'll see."

Later, with the aid of some relatives, she placed him in Allenby's in London, and to take this job this man of twelve years made his first journey to the city on the Thames.

He made such good use of the London opportunity that when he was thirteen years old — thirteen, mind you — he had advanced to the post of cashier of that house. In addition, his eagerness and willingness and gentle manners had won him permission from Mr. Allenby to study the selling end of the business and the materials, stuffs, shawls and ready-made clothes of which this consisted.

Every moment that was not occupied by Allenby's he spent in the museums and art galleries, studying the great paintings. Those whose subjects flaunted elaborate costumes fascinated him before all others. One in particular, that of Queen Elizabeth in her velvet gown embroidered with the ears and eyes, signifying that she saw everything and heard everything, was destined to

() A CENTURY OF FASHION ()

become the love of his life. Young as he was, he understood the meaning of the strange design and was so struck by its quaint symbolism, so impressed by the luxuriousness of the painted velvet, that he exclaimed, never dreaming that it would come to pass, "If I ever am rich enough, I shall have that copied. I'll have stuff made like that with eyes and ears."

Before his apprenticeship as a salesman and clerk was completed, Charles Frederick worked in several shops in London, including Swan and Edgar's at the corner of Piccadilly. At last he considered himself ready to conquer other fields, and with the encouragement and aid of his mother, who collected a small sum of money from her relatives for the venture, my father quitted London for Paris when he was not yet twenty years old.

In spite of the fact that those who financed him were people of ample means, the sum they allowed him was so small that when he arrived in Paris after exercising the utmost economy, he had left in his pocket just one hundred and seventeen francs—at that time about twenty-five dollars. There was high courage for you—undertaking to conquer Paris with a hundred and seventeen francs and not one word of French!

However, he soon found a place in a small dry-goods store — whether it was the Ville de Paris or some other,

() A CENTURY OF FASHION (

I am not certain — which dealt chiefly in materials. It was a good firm, one of the best of its time, although nothing like the great houses of to-day, the Galeries Lafayette, which are financed by millions. It had to its credit, however, the creating, indirectly, of one social sensation in its modest existence. This was when the widow of its owner succeeded in marrying her daughter to a man of impeccable standing. And while this marriage of the daughter of a shopkeeper to an aristocrat did not quite attain the aspect of a scandal, it did become a nine days' wonder.

In the shop distinguished by this mésalliance my father began his working day at eight o'clock by arriving, removing his smart coat and hat, donning an old coat and sweeping out the place. This done, he dusted and arranged the shelves, got back into his fine clothes and was standing, spick and span, at nine o'clock ready to receive customers. At eight o'clock in the evening his work was done and he was free to enjoy himself, to study his enchanting stuffs, to pick up his education and, if he found the time, to sleep. A twelve-hour day! Can't you hear the scream of anguish with which a modern clerk would greet such hours?

He remained with this house for a while, and then went with a firm famous at that time by the name of

A CENTURY OF FASHION

Gagelin, which was located in the Rue de Richelieu. This was the first house to handle cashmere shawls and ready-made coats, and the one in which my father began his work of revolutionizing fashion.

In order to understand something of the magnitude of this undertaking, it is necessary to consider just what the dressmaking industry consisted of in the 1850's when the Lincolnshire lad became an employe of Gagelin's. To be truthful, as an industry or business or anything else worthy of a solid title, it simply did not exist. In the middle of the nineteenth century, if one wanted a coat made, one bought the material at some house like Gagelin's, took it to a seamstress, had her make it after the fashion one had been wearing for the last ten years, line it with an old discarded dress, and one's coat problem was solved for the next four or five years. This, in my father's youth, was what is known as "confection" dressmaking, or as it is sometimes called to-day, loftily, "The Art of Costume Designing."

There was no question of fine materials, a fortiori, of brocades or of fancy weaves. Plain stuff in the ordinary shades of blue and black and brown and red was the material from which all costumes were fashioned. Trimmings such as are used nowadays were unknown. It never occurred to either customer or seamstress that

a bit of escalloped or plaited flounce or a buckle of jet would relieve the deadly monotony of a common material. The mode was stereotyped. And as the seamstress perpetuating it was only preoccupied with getting the garment finished as quickly as possible, the cut was not only careless and inelegant, but often a thing over which to weep.

The profits from such work were negligible. Because of competition the prices of homework — travail à façon — were reduced; having no designs or ideas with which to attract a following, the price was the only thing in which the poor dressmakers could outdo one another! — until, in the end, the net incomes of the modistes, most of whom worked independently or with a small number of assistants, reached the vanishing point.

The export trade was in an even more lamentable state. Instead of planning ahead and buying stock in quantities, the establishments exporting perhaps a dozen models a year — all so much alike that it is amazing the buyers could distinguish between them — would buy material as they needed it day by day from such houses as that which employed my father. And, incidentally, the models designed for export were so carelessly cut — the dressmakers counted on their being

shipped out of the country! — so badly made, of such ordinary material and design and often flaunting some combination dictated by a misguided sense of humor on the part of the dressmaker, that to-day no civilized person would be seen in them.

As can easily be imagined, the clothing of humanity's nakedness had not become a fine art in the days that first saw my father installed at Gagelin's.

Even the advertisements of the most famous couturiers of that time were in keeping with the lack of initiative on the part of the industry. The greatest of them all stated simply, "Mlle. Fauvet, a pupil of Mesdames Victorine Pierrard and Roscol, dressmakers for court and town wear, is shipping all articles appertaining to women's wear to the provinces and abroad."

And another taken from the Almanach Bottin (directory for 1850, page 693), "Mme. Rodger & Cie., Ladies dressmaker. Only house in Paris where readymade wear for ladies and children can be found, 26 Rue Nationale Saint Martin."

It was undoubtedly time for a sartorial revolution.

The first step toward this long-needed change was taken by a woman. Mme. Rodger, the ladies' dress-maker of the foregoing announcement, conceived the idea, which was simple enough, not only of making

dresses, but of supplying the material thereto and in this way realizing a profit on retailing materials as well as on converting them into the finished product.

She did not, however, carry her idea beyond purchasing materials wholesale — from whichever firm made her the best offer — and retailing them to her customers. It never occurred to her to change or abandon the eternal model with its close-fitting plain bodice and voluminous skirt in which the materials and yardage had not varied for years.

While Mme. Rodger was occupying herself with this modest reform, my father had become a valued employe of Gagelin's and had met my mother. She was then what was called a "demoiselle de magazin" at Gagelin's - the word mannequin had not been coined at the time, and, had it been, would have been considered an insult. Family reverses had compelled her to earn her own living, even as they had my father. And where my father had had a brother who had profited by the days of domestic prosperity, my mother had an elder sister who, before the family's financial troubles, had had the good fortune to marry the architect — a pupil of Viollet le Duc — who was responsible for much of the work on the cathedrals at Evreux, Toulouse, Rheims and elsewhere. The father of these lucky and unlucky sisters was a tax collector of Auvergne.

A CENTURY OF FASHION

The work my mother did at Gagelin's was similar to that of the modern mannequin. She wore the shawls and cloaks and dresses so that the prospective purchaser might judge them for himself. She was exceedingly successful in this, not only because she had grace and beauty, knew how to carry herself and to wear clothes, but because she had great charm and knew how to smile.

It was my father's principal task to sell the models she displayed, and thus they were thrown together all through their long day. Even in those early beginnings they proved perfect complements of each other, and, as a team, invaluable to Gagelin's. It was the rare shopper who did not succumb immediately to their youth and engaging enthusiasm.

Occasionally, however, not even her loveliness or my father's clever salesmanship could bring a prospective customer to a decision. When this happened, my father always resorted to a little ruse, harmless, but exceedingly effective. To day it would probably be called an instance of applied psychology. After the entire collection had been shown and my mother had put on and taken off shawls until she was ready to drop, my father would stop suddenly, regard his victim thoughtfully and then muse half to himself, "I have a wonderful shawl, a superb piece of work, but I don't know whether



TYPE OF GOWN AT TIME BUSINESS OF WORTH WAS ESTABLISHED



THE STYLE C. F. WORTH LOVED

After getting rid of the crinoline he tried to revive it

you would care to go so high." Whereupon, greatly incensed that my father had not thought him capable of paying any price, the customer would demand to see this wonderful shawl immediately. Then my father would fuss around among the shawls for a moment, take out one of the first shown, drape it over my mother's shoulders a little differently and show it to his victim with a superb gesture in which reverence and triumph were adroitly mingled.

The prospective purchaser would look at it, lean back a bit and squint at it knowingly and then exclaim, "Now that's something like it. Just what I've been looking for. Why did n't you show me that in the first place, instead of all this trash?" It was an excusable trick, for, after a man has looked at a certain number of things, either paintings or clothes or beautiful women, the ability to grasp differences vanishes and they all look alike. In using it, my father only helped his customers make up their minds.

In time my father became an associate of the firm of Gagelin and Opige — the latter was a relative of Gagelin's — and married the "demoiselle de magazin" who wore the cashmeres so beautifully and smiled so charmingly. After they were married, he found her so lovely that he could not give her enough pretty things. And

he began designing beautiful dresses for her graceful figure and enchanting bonnets to frame her dear face. These he had made at Gagelin's and superintended the fittings himself. And when people saw her wearing them about the shop they exclaimed, "Why, Mrs. Worth, where did you get that lovely dress? I must have one just like it."

Thus the first Worth gowns were designed by love.

After this unexpected success with my mother's gowns, and the concrete evidence they gave that the dress-buying public would welcome new designs, my father, remembering Mme. Rodger's coup, went to his employers and suggested, "Why don't you have a collection of dresses made up, as you have of coats? Have them done in muslin in different styles. I'm sure you'd find a ready sale for them. You are already selling materials, both wholesale and retail, and why not profit by Mme. Rodger's example and turn them into the finished product? In other words, install a dressmaking department and realize a triple profit, namely, the wholesaler's and retailer's, plus that of the making?"

But Gagelin and Opige were scandalized at the thought of turning their dignified house into a dressmaking department, and for quite a time would not

A CENTURY OF FASHION

even discuss the proposed outrage. But at length my father prevailed and got their permission to prepare a few muslin models of dresses and cloaks.

In planning the latter he abandoned the cloak model then the fashion and designed each mantle with an eye to the material of which it was to be made. If the material were velvet he used one pattern; if it were wool he used another. One of the first changes he made was to alter the sleeves so as not only to improve the feminine silhouette, but to allow their wearer more freedom of movement. Furthermore, he requested the manufacturers at Lyons to make and send him materials more in keeping with the needs and uses of everyday life than the inescapable cashmere.

He was so successful with these first models that Gagelin's soon gave him permission to install a large department, devoted only to dressmaking. An important feature of this experiment was the salesrooms—the forerunner of the modern *couturier's* salons—where foreign buyers might come, inspect and order from a collection of models, made up in every material then manufactured, such as silk, gauze, velvet and wool, and trimmed with the passementerie then known, and to the variety of which my father was adding daily.

A CENTURY OF FASHION

In designing his dresses my father followed the same method that had proved so successful with cloaks. He considered the feminine figure and saw to it that the bodices were better fitted, took care that the direction of the weave (sens) material for the various parts of a garment is cut either on the bias or straight, so that the warp will always lie in the direction taken by the principal movements of the body — gave the figure the maximum of elegance. These models he persuaded women of striking appearance and personality to wear, and thus introduced, they soon attained popularity, and all women adopted them.

In launching a new style my mother was her husband's chief ally, albeit often an unwilling one.

The only storms that ever came up in their very happy married life where those tempests brewed by my father's suggestion that his lovely wife wear something new. To the women who later would have paid any amount to have my father design a gown exclusively for them, my mother's attitude would have seemed incomprehensible. But to that sensitive child, with her great shyness and fear of ridicule, such honor only meant mental agony, and my poor father always had a bitter struggle, involving tears, protests and reproaches, to persuade her to wear each new model he prepared for her.

It was not that she did not like new things, after some one else had introduced them, but that she could not bear to be the one to make the introduction. The Empress Eugénie, whose gowns my father designed for so many years, indeed until her death in exile, was no better, and many amiable battles were waged between that royal beauty and her *couturier*, skirmishes that usually ended, incidentally, by my father having his own way.

But the most famous of his struggles with my mother took place over a dress which had been made for her to wear at one of the yearly balls given by the Dames de la Halle, or market women, in honor of the empress and her court. Society fought to get into these balls, which were always unique as well as beautiful, and my mother had been most fortunate in obtaining an invitation.

The dress my father designed for this occasion was a very lovely one of pink tulle, extremely full as to skirt, but of great plainness and exquisite simplicity. Around her waist he twisted a purple velvet ribbon and in her hair he placed — here comes the tragedy! — a tiny spray of pansies. To-day as a sensation such an innocent thing would fall as flat as a saucer, but when my mother saw herself in her mirror, she began to weep

as though the end of the world had come, and to wail, "I will not go to the ball with that tree in my hair!"

In the early summer of 1856, my mother's despair at being made the victim of the inexorable genius of her husband was forgotten for a time. Her doctor, who had worried about her lack of strength for some months, ordered her to leave the heat of Paris — which was frightful that year — and go to Dieppe. She obeyed, and in that seaside village, long before I was expected, I was born on the twenty-fifth of July.



MME. C. F. WORTH AS A WIDOW



MME. C. F. WORTH
About 1860



HER TWO CHILDREN

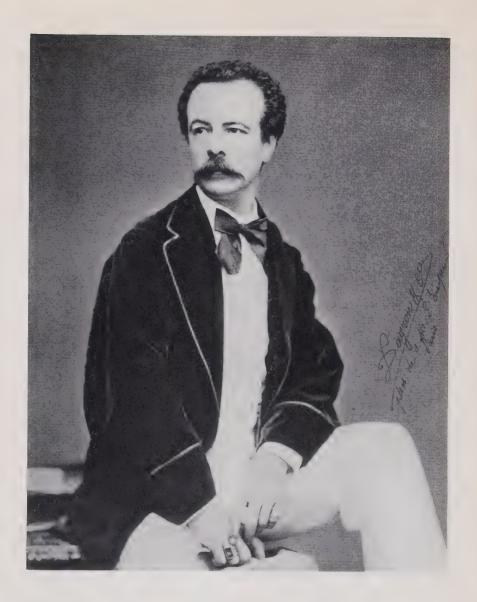
Showing the first short costume worn in

France and the little round hat

without strings



MME. C. F. WORTH WITH AN
ALMOST PRINCESS DRESS
WITHOUT A BELT



C. F. WORTH
About 1864

IN BUSINESS FOR HIMSELF



When I was eighteen months old my father severed his connection with his old associates. A combination of false pride and shortsightedness on the part of his employers permitted this to happen. Had Gagelin's not been stiffnecked to the point of stupidity, they would have made any concession to keep him, let alone the simple thing he asked, for in letting my father go they lost their most precious bird, or as Americans say, their one best bet.

My father had become the very heart of the business. Every new design, each new material launched, was born of his inspiration and went through his hands. The selling end of the business profited endlessly by his suggestions and understanding of psychology. Even the fittings were superintended by him.

Attending to this great mass of detail left him with

never a moment of leisure. Often he was unable to get away for luncheon before half-past two or three o'clock.

And my poor mother gallantly shared all inconveniences with him. Although she was enceinte at the time, she rose at an unearthly hour in order to dress, breakfast and get down to the store by eight o'clock. From eight in the morning until eight at night there she stayed, her waist imprisoned in stays, her stomach insulted with warmed-over meals in the middle of the afternoon, with their scorched, twice cooked meats and soggy vegetables. At last, realizing that her health was being undermined, she went to Gagelin and Opige and asked that she and my father be permitted to have a small apartment in the building occupied by the store, in order that the tedious journey to and from work, the wretched, irregular meals and the great strain imposed upon her might be obviated. But the gentlemen of the firm would not hear of such a thing. No associate, no matter how valuable, should detract from the dignity and standing of their venerable house by living on the premises.

Upon hearing this, my father decided that it was time he broke away from Gagelin's. He had heard of the plans of a certain Mr. Boberg, a young man from

Sweden, who occupied a position in another shop similar to that my father held at Gagelin's. I believe it was La Ville de Lyons. My father sought him out and discussed ways and means. It developed that Mr. Boberg had a little money of his own and was able to raise, fortunately, with the aid of relatives, a little more.

These two young men, having pluck as well as vision, took this small sum, severed their connections with their former employers, and rented an apartment on the first floor of the building known as Number 7 Rue de la Paix. Mr. Boberg lived in town, but my father and mother established their home, and their little shop, all on that first floor in the Rue de la Paix.

When my father opened this modest establishment—the first in that thoroughfare—the Rue de la Paix was as dead as the Avenue de Messine is to-day. It was a street of private homes, and it seemed absurd to settle upon it for business purposes. The Opéra was not yet built and such dressmaking houses as existed were all in the Rue de Richelieu or the Chaussée d'Antin, while the jewelers were at the Palais Royal. But no sooner had my father established himself and won success, than a host of imitators and competitors sprang up. A certain M. Pingat, also an employé of a big firm, profited

by my father's example and went and did likewise. Aurelie was another, and even my father's former colleagues followed the trail he had blazed.

His idea spread like an oil stain. One of the most startling proofs of the impetus it gave the trade may be found in statistics. In 1850 there were but one hundred and fifty-eight establishments, none of them of any size or importance, devoted to women's wear. In 1898 there were 1932, and to-day - but what with America's great houses, it is impossible to compute with any degree of accuracy the thousands upon thousands of firms devoted exclusively to clothing the feminine world. Some one once said, in speaking of my father and the debt the Rue de la Paix owed him, that his statue wrought of solid gold should be standing on the Colonne Vendôme instead of Napoleon's. One of my first impressions was of that column and the Rue de la Paix. It was when the troops returned from Italy, and passed in review before the emperor and empress down the street that to-day resembles a bazaar of jewels and fabrics only to be found in fables. I was three years old, and the year was 1859.

In front of the Ministère de la Justice, Place Vendôme, a great stand, draped in red velvet, had been built for the emperor and empress and their court. My

PIVERSIDE JUNIO R COLLEGE

() A CENTURY OF FASHION ()

mother returned that morning from the Mont Dore, where she had been taking the cure, especially to see the troops, and it was on that day I fell in love with her! She wore a white mousseline dress, trimmed with Valenciennes. Her sash was of some multi-colored rich stuff, like an Indian scarf, that fell in long streamers at the back. Its richly blended colors fascinated me, and I remember finding it again, later, among her things.

At the appointed hour, a cry went up from the gathering crowd that the heroes were coming, and every one rushed to a point of vantage. I can see it yet, — the soldiers with jaunty bunches of flowers on their rifles, my excited, lovely mother in her pretty dress and the velvet-hung reviewing stand where sat the emperor and empress. There is a painting of the scene either at the Luxembourg Gallery or at Versailles, I am not certain which.

As the shop and our home in the Street of Peace, that was to become the show window of the world, were all on one floor, I was running in and out of the workrooms every day until I was old enough to be sent to boarding school. I thus absorbed the atmosphere of dress designing as unconsciously as I learned to walk or to talk. In fact, if there is anything in prenatal influence, I was predestined to become a *couturier*. I

A CENTURY OF FASHION

was not only born in the business, but before I arrived my mother's waking and sleeping hours were regulated and ruled by the exigencies of the craft.

One of my chief delights was to watch the costumes for a fancy dress ball being fitted. Most of the ladies ordered these at the last minute and came to the shop to dress for the ball. Many a time my father made an elaborate costume on twelve hours' notice, and had its owner come to his shop at any hour of the night to be sewed into it and have her hair done. There was, of course, no keeping me away from such fascinating proceedings. For even in my babyhood, costumes, particularly those fantastic ones to be worn at masquerades or in the theater, enthralled me. And later, one of the principal joys of my youth was to attend costume plays.

As soon as my father was in business for himself, he devoted a great deal of his time to finding ways to improve the quality of the materials then manufactured, to creating new ones and to reviving old ones. It is absurd to think that in 1858 there was no satin to be had except a kind of lustrine used to line candy boxes and cover buttons. Ribbons existed, but satin not at all. The only materials then in current use were faille, moire, velvet, grosgrain, terry velvet, and taffeta. The dance frocks were always made entirely of tulle. All



PRINCESS NARISKIN 1868



A COUNTRY OR TRAVELLING COSTUME



MRS. HARTMANN, SHOWING A
DRESS WHICH WAS A HUGE
SUCCESS IN 1866



THE SORT OF HAT WHICH WAS
WORN WHEN RIDING



DUCHESSE DE MORNY 1863



DUCHESSE DE MORNY AT HOME



DUCHESSE DE MORNY, TALKING
TO HERSELF
Notice bavolet at bottom of hat



MRS. HENRY DE PAYNE, WHO WORE
THE FAMOUS COSTUME TRIMMED
WITH CARROTS AT ONE OF THE
COURT BALLS

women, irrespective of size or type, who were not part of the "tapestry", as we say, and who appeared on the ballroom floor, had to be clad in that floating cobweb fabric. Incidentally, women were considered "tapestry" at forty in that long ago.

Another hard-and-fast rule of the fashions of the fifties was that a married woman must wear a cap or "bonnet." It would have been considered indecent for her to have appeared in the headgear of her virginal state. These bonnets were even worn in the house and ballroom. In certain paintings — those of Ingres, for instance — the women of that decade are portrayed in ball dresses, wearing this coy little cap. After she married, my mother meekly submitted to this custom, but my father, hating her bondage, soon freed her by creating a new fashion in hats.

After materials, my father's great preoccupation was the development of new trimmings — passementerie — and the revival of old patterns in lace and embroidery. His mind never tired of creating.

All the materials and trimmings he used in carrying out the designs born of his fecund inspiration were of French manufacture. He saw to it that the makers of French woolens perfected their product so that he might buy that fabric in France, instead of in England,

which had always been the country for woolens. The only stuff for which he ever broke this rule was Irish poplin. For some reason he never could get it satisfactorily manufactured in France. He championed French goods out of gratitude to France, to whom, he said, he owed everything, because she had enabled him to express his peculiar gift.

My father first took up the cause of passementerie when he created escalloped and pleated flounces, ruches, roulletes, to add variety to his early Gagelin models. One of the first trimmings he used was jet, and when he introduced it toward 1855, it was pronounced too heavy and too showy, and met with great hostility. Two years later, however, owing to the discretion with which it had been used, it had become the principal ornament of coats and dresses. And it held its decorative own for fifty years, to the distinct advantage of the industry of passementerie, to whose development it so largely contributed.

Passementerie was only beginning to be known at the time my father made his first Gagelin models, and while it never exceeded four francs a meter, that price was considered excessive and my father had to call lace and embroidery to his aid.

Lace, which soon became one of the strong competi-

A CENTURY OF FASHION

tors of jet, at first received the same cold reception accorded its glittering rival, but for an entirely different reason.

Real lace was so rare and so jealously guarded by its owners that one had the greatest difficulty in persuading them to use it as trimming. It is true that there had been timid attempts to manufacture it since the Jacquard system had come into use in 1840, but as there was practically no call for this fairie fabric, little had been done toward perfecting the process. However, my father persuaded certain of his customers, by adroit draping and disposition of the lace, to permit him to use their priceless heirlooms, and the result was so irresistible that it vanquished all opposition. When the supply of real lace ran out, as it soon did, he brought imitation lace, so cunningly made as to deceive all but the most experienced eye, to the rescue. And again through my father's efforts was another industry, that of lace making, resuscitated and made prosperous.

It must not be thought that the way my father traveled in his first decade was one that was wholly easy or glorious. As in most things, the rejuvenation of the art of dress was slow and painful. The public was recalcitrant, and accepted his innovations with reluctance. Not the least hindrance to development

and rapid progress which he encountered was his clients' expectations and demands that he make a coat, employing four meters of velvet and costing on an average a hundred and thirty-nine francs, that would last at least three or four years. Furthermore, anything like an innovation was regarded with suspicion and frowned upon, even by the merchants who might profit by it. In fact, one of the members of the jury at the 1851 exhibition once told my brother Gaston that his fellow jurors had criticized the models my father had on exhibition there with the utmost harshness and severity, because they differed so drastically from the accepted mode.

But, in time, my father began to win over the whole-sale and retail trade, both bitter critics and thrifty customers. When at last the women began to understand that they no longer need wear the selfsame ugly model, but each might have a gown especially designed to suit her type and personality, his battle was all but won. He had gained so much headway even in 1851 that, in spite of the severe criticisms of the jury at the exhibition, the Gagelin models and mantelets shown obtained such favor that the buyers from the London houses who, along with the flood of other visitors, had come to Paris to study this miraculous new industry at

close range, had to increase their orders. Where a year or so before a dozen models had comprised an order, soon hundreds were the rule. All of which meant new and glorious life to the struggling couturiers. Another benefit derived from this exhibition was that the enthusiasts returned home and established shops in their own countries where Paris models might be copied.

Further impetus was given our craft and its contributing industries by the restoration of the Empire toward the end of 1852, as it brought with it many official receptions where only the most superb toilets were admissible.

The foundations for our present enormous export were laid in that decade by the socially prominent and socially ambitious people from other countries who, anticipating being admitted to the Tuileries and received at Court, came, looked, and bought their clothes in Paris. Among these were the Americans. This buying was of necessity lavish, for aside from the receptions held at the imperial palaces at Paris, Compiègne and Fontainebleau, there was a great deal of entertaining not only among themselves but for and by the Parisians.

When these travelers returned home, their clothes from Paris stirred the desire for emulation in the breasts

of their dearest rivals and friends, and automatically new customers were created for us. And these became as loyal to us as those whom they imitated, chiefly, no doubt, because there was no other market that specialized so successfully in clothes. It was the beginning of the golden age for *couturier's* and manufacturers of silk, lace and all other articles contributing to milady's toilet.

With success the Parisian was enabled to make manifest that inborn taste, to day called *chic*, which is one of her chief characteristics, and soon she was setting the standard of elegance for the world. She became so renowned in time for her instinct for sartorial beauty that a gown that did not come from Paris was not considered, and as women insisted that they must have a French model to save their self-respect the City of Light became the chief source of supply for the civilized world in so far as milady's dress was concerned.

But there was always an occasional critic to rise and call the new fashion an invention of the devil. My mother was never to forget the reception one of these accorded an innovation that revolutionized millinery and in itself had considerable retentissement.

In the fifties, women wore hats called "cabriolets" or "bibis", a name derived from the wide brim shaped like

a carriage hood which framed the face and was tied under the chin with wide bands of ribbon. The family album will yield up many a picture in which such a hat is shown. Inside this brim was set narrow ruching of white or colored tulle known as "bajoues." The back of the hat ended a little above the neck and encircled the small chignon — always made of living hair and never false — then part of the fashionable coiffure. To this "calotte" or back of the bonnet was sewed a wide flounce of material that matched the hat, called a "bavolet." This hung to the shoulders and entirely concealed the back of the neck and hair. The cabriolet had come into fashion during the Empire, and the Restoration and reign of Louis Philippe found it in high favor.

My father never liked the fashion, considering it a pity that a woman's hair, often her chief claim to beauty, should be three quarters hidden by a hat. (What would he say nowadays!) Having always wanted to revive the mode of the period of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, he decided that the renascence should begin with the cabriolet, and persuaded my mother to attend the races wearing a hat from which the bavolet had been removed. It was a veritable coup d'etat. Nothing could happen to day that could

cause a sensation comparable with the one my mother created, appearing without a *bavolet* and with her neck and chignon exposed.

Horses and horse racing were forgotten. All eyes were on Mme. Worth and her scandalous hat. But it was not until returning from the races and her carriage came alongside that of the Princesse de Metternich that her new bonnet levied its first tribute. The princesse leaned out and exclaimed, "My dear Mme. Worth, what a charming hat!" That was the beginning. Within the week, the princesse and her contemporaries appeared in hats without bavolets.

However, one of my mother's friends who spent a greater part of the year in the country, had not had time to learn of the new fashion before my mother called, wearing a hat without its flounce to the shoulders. If my mother had walked into the room without her head, this great prude would not have been more scandalized. She contented herself with tight-lipped disapproval at first — not once during the call did she smile! — and outraged glares.

But at last the hat was too much for her, and she said sternly, "But, my dear, your hat has no bavolet."

My mother answered, "Why, no," mildly. "Bavolets are no longer worn. Did n't you know?"



MISS VAN WART AS MARIE ANTOINETTE



DONNA FRANCA FLORIO, LONG CONSIDERED THE BEST LOOKING WOMAN OF ITALY, IN MEDIAEVAL COSTUME

Whereupon her friend decided, "I never saw anything so perfectly disgusting. That hat is simply indecent" (impudique).

Upon my mother's return home, she related her experience to my father. And to the day of his death he never got over shouting with laughter over the woman who considered exposing the back of the neck impudique.

Although my father was very serious about his work, he never objected to brother and myself being literally under his feet when we were small. And away from the strain of the business he took great delight in our pranks.

One, which he enjoyed hugely, took decided liberties with a certain Lady X, a woman whose kindness of heart was only equaled by the vastness of her proportions. I had come upon a dress which she had brought to be made over, and conceived the notion of putting two of our girls into it, with their arms about each other's waists. This I did, and when the belt was fastened and each girl allowed a sleeve, the dress still proved ample for its giggling occupants.

In triumph, I stationed my freak outside my father's reception-room door and entering, asked him solemnly if he could see Lady X, who had come about her dress.

He rose, all prepared to receive the titled lady with his usual easy charm, and I led in the substitute born of my irreverence. He was stunned for a moment and then threw back his head and roared. That mighty laughter was shrewd commentary on the delightful relationship that always existed between my father and his sons. There was no lecturing about important customers, no scolding about risking a valuable dress, — just that side-splitting shout at a prank that sounds stupid enough in the reading, but which kept our little household in an uproar all the evening.

My mother, always to me the most delicious of women, took her parenthood in a more intense fashion. Like all young girls of her time — especially in the provinces — her education had been summary. She had been taught gracefulness and how to walk and how to dance. To this was added some spelling, addition, subtraction, division and multiplication, a little of geography, sewing and, above all, the working of embroidery and tapestry. The result of this training was an adorable creature who might have been born of the love between a rose and a butterfly, but one with absolutely no idea of the practical things of life. It never occurred to her to worry about our teeth or tonsils or stomachs. Such mere things of the body she left to the superintend-

ent of the school. But she adored us and nearly fainted every time we slipped on the floor or stumbled over a pebble. And she was convinced that she was a model mother, because she always saw to it that we were well groomed on our holidays at home.

She set about this as soon as we arrived from boarding school. She would smother us with kisses and then set us on a chair and began combing our hair. Every time the small-toothed comb yanked out a lock and a scream escaped, she would frown prettily and threaten us with severe punishment. Then she would put our hair up in curl papers which she pinched into place with a hot iron. After this we had to stay "curl-papered" for about two hours until the waves set. After this penance we were combed and brushed and greased. Then we were admired and furiously kissed and told that we might go out and play, on the condition that we refrain from exciting games and keep our curls intact for the rest of the day.

Another subject of great concern to her was the clothes we wore on these becurled vacations. Feeling that long trousers were not graceful on children — we were then eight and ten years old — she had a tailor make two costumes that were agony to us. The nether garments of these horrors were very short, tight

breeches, supplemented by gigantic gaiters with about forty buttons each, that came fifteen centimeters above the knee. These gaiters were more than tight. With them on, we could not bend our legs when we wanted to sit down. This queer suit was completed by a short little blouse with a leather belt. But the important thing was that these clothes were of a light tobacco color. And an intimate friend of my mother who delighted in teasing her, exclaimed, "Oh, look at the two monkeys," upon seeing us.

This made our poor little mother furious, but did not prevent her exhibiting her two monkeys in the Bois. Owing to the tightness of our gaiters and our having to sit on the flap seat of the coupe, I believe that no torture of the Inquisition equaled the agony of these promenades.

. Shortly before this period, my father received the ultimate accolade of success, the patronage of the Court. And in 1860 I saw one of the most famous of the world's beauties, the lovely Empress Eugénie, for the first time.



THE INFLUENCE OF EMPRESS EUGÉNIE



In 1859, the Empress Eugénie decided, in her quick, imperious fashion, that she must have something from the much discussed shop in the Rue de la Paix and sent for my father.

Court etiquette required evening dress for this official visit to the Tuileries, regardless of the hour. But my father, declaring that it was inconvenient for him to change his frock coat — part of the uniform of the head of a firm and his employes at that time — in the middle of the day, went as he was, defying rules.

Scorning precedent was becoming something of a habit with him. Previously he had flown in the face of convention by growing a mustache. In the middle of the nineteenth century a judge, or a notary might adorn his upper lip, but the mere head of a commercial establishment, — never! The date of this audacity is problematical. But it must have been soon after the opening

of his shop in Rue de la Paix, for that drooping, Mandarin mustache and his beloved face are inseparable in my memory. After this defiance of the whole judiciary body of France, to appear before the Empress in other than the tailed garment prescribed by royal edict required hardly any courage.

Arriving at the Tuileries in the banned frock coat, my father found the Empress Eugénie most charming, but withal something of a beauty, a little spoiled by the warm sunshine of life. And where fashions were concerned, he discovered her a decided reactionary. She was always the last to accept a new mode or a suggestion, and then only under protest. To all innovations she was belligerently réfractaire. When in the end they were part and parcel of the current fashion and no longer to be ignored, she only smiled upon them after some diplomat had pointed out that it would be politic. My father encountered this trait in its most stubborn manifestation when he undertook to secure her sponsorship for Lyons and its silks.

Long before my father had his own shop, Lyons, in so far as the fabrics and beautiful colors upon which her glory as a city of fine materials had been founded, apparently had forgotten everything she had ever known. The first thing my father did after he was

established was to prevail upon her manufacturers to revive something of this glory. In time, as has already been told, his clientele, won by the distinction of his designs and the rare old patterns of the lovely stuffs he used, began to buy lavishly and Lyons was given new life. A single illustration tells something of the extent of this industrial renascence effected by my father's championship. In 1853 he had been able to find only two flounces of Alençon needed to trim a wedding dress, measuring three meters and fifty centimeters, in the whole of France, and they were not of the same pattern. When the empress distributed the prizes at the Exhibition of 1855, the skirt of her magnificent cherry velvet dress was entirely covered with Alençon and valued at about 25,000 francs at the time.

It was at this exhibition, by the way, that my father introduced his "manteau de cour." This court mantle hung from the shoulders, instead of the waist, a radical departure, and was of moire antique watered silk—embroidered in gold. It immediately became the royal fashion and may be seen in any picture of a queen in her robes of state taken during the last seventy years.

However, to manage the sensation of a new "manteau de cour" or bring a fifteen thousand dollar Alençon skirt into being was one thing. To create a demand for

silk — of which my father was exceedingly fond, especially for great occasions — was another. This required the patronage of the empress.

To secure Eugénie's sponsorship of Lyons fabrics seemed impossible. She had no tolerance of the new, as has been mentioned, and in addition Lyons had frowned politically upon her and upon the emperor. But my father was determined to rescue the French manufacturers and, being a deft diplomat and no mean politician, he made for her majesty a very beautiful dress of Lyons brocade. The color was beige, and the flower design woven in the fabric was taken from a rare Chinese shawl.

But when he showed it to Eugénie, she gave it one look and declared flatly, "I sha'n't wear it. It would make me look like a curtain."

"But Your Majesty," protested my father, "won't you wear it for the sake of what your patronage would mean to the manufacturers of Lyons?"

Eugénie smiled ironically. "Why? Because they have been so good to us?" referring sardonically to the opposition of Lyons to herself and the emperor.

"Their attitude is all the more reason for your wearing their silks," retorted my father — "to show that you ——" But before he could bring in the old reference

to the efficacy of heaping coals of fire the emperor entered and my father turned to him with, "Oh, Sire, please persuade Her Majesty to wear this dress. There are probably ten or twelve leaders of the fashion waiting for me at my shop, and upon my return I sha'n't be able to get out of my coat before they fly at me screaming, 'Show us what the empress chose.' And as soon as I show them, they will immediately order dresses of the same material, and if Her Majesty selects a Lyons fabric, five minutes later the city of Lyons will know that the empress has honored them by wearing a dress of their newest material."

The emperor nodded agreement to my father's eloquence and turning to Eugénie said, "M. Worth is right. Wear that dress only once, if you don't like it, but at least wear it that once. It is a new material made by our own manufacturers, and it would be wise."

So the Empress Eugénie consented to wear the dress of beige brocade that "looked like a curtain" and Lyons silk became a household word. A year later it was worn even in the streets.

The proper day dress of the sixties was of silk, with a trailing skirt which the ladies picked up daintily when they walked. This mode endured until the Exhibition

of 1878. Then it was decided that long dresses on the street were unsanitary and short skirts were substituted. At least we called them short then! It was about this time that long polonaises with the Watteau pleats in the back began to be worn, as may be seen by the photographs. In 1872 statistics were brought forward to show that when my father persuaded Eugénie to wear the dress "like a curtain" he automatically increased the looms in operation in Lyons from 57,500 to 120,000.

Another instance in which my autocratic parent prevailed with the unprogressive empress was in the matter of her coiffure. He had persuaded my mother to cut her front hair and curl it in tiny ringlets over her forehead. How he had overcome her terror of ridicule long enough for this is tribute to his powers of persuasion. But he had, and she wore it thus for the first time to hear Adelina Patti. We were on most friendly terms with Patti, and she often would send us a box when she sang. The morning following, De Girardin, the journalist, commented in his column that "Pretty Mme. Worth appeared at the Patti concert last night wearing her hair in a fashion that made her resemble Madame Récamier and which was very much admired." This publicity, coupled with the very authentic stir

created by this drastic departure from the plain "bandeaux" universally worn, reached the empress and she asked for the hairdresser responsible. But when she heard that the scissors must first have their way with the imperial locks, she shrank and cried, "Oh, but I could never cut my hair." So the hairdresser made a little artificial fringe for her to wear under her bandeaux. Later, however, when she had become accustomed to the idea and every one had cut their hair, she bowed her head to the shears.

That the empress was lovely in the new fashion goes without saying. What splendid foils to each other Eugénie and my mother would have been! The Titian empress and my dark, lovely mother, with her fine nose and pleasing face! The classic remoteness of Eugénie and the great simplicity and charm of my father's wife! Photographs do not do my mother justice. Her smile was half her enchantment; and as she smiled very readily, she was always enchanting. A certain Victor Girod, a great friend of the Princesse Mathilde, painted a portrait of her in the same year (1858 or 1859) that he did one of the Comtesse de Castiglione. These two portraits were shown together, and the brunette beauty of my mother and the blonde loveliness of the beautiful Italian, thus contrasted,

created much appreciative comment. Needless to say that, so far as I was concerned, no woman, comtesse or empress, was ever so beautiful as my mother.

My father, of course, saw the Empress Eugénie frequently, but I only had occasion to be in her presence twice. The first time, I was only a child of five or six years. The royal pair had given a garden party for all children born on the same day as the Prince Imperial and to whom they had stood godmother and godfather. Tables were set in the Tuileries Gardens, and the children were served by Her Majesty.

As the gardens were open to others besides her god-children, one of the young men in my father's employ, who had had occasion to come in contact with Her Majesty, took my brother and myself to this birthday party. This bold youth, once on the scene of festivities, promptly worked his way to the side of the empress and said, "Your Majesty" — dragging us forward firmly — "these are the sons of M. Worth." She turned and spoke to us pleasantly. How abashed I was! Had the Holy Virgin suddenly smiled at me, I could not have been more awed. Indeed, in so far as appearance was concerned, she was not without a certain divinity. When she smiled her expression was soft and winning; her lips were all the more scarlet for



EMPRESS EUGÉNIE
From a portrait by Winterhalter in the Museum at Versailles



DRESS MADE FOR EMPRESS EUGÉNIE AS PROSERPINE

A CENTURY OF FASHION

the whiteness of her magnificent teeth, her hair was dark red with a hint of gold — later she made it lighter! — and subdued in smooth "bandeaux" and she was clad in a long lilac dress with a hat of white tulle.

My second interview took place when I was about thirteen. I had accompanied the same lively young man to St. Cloud with a message for Her Majesty. We were living at Suresnes at the time and had gone on foot into St. Cloud, a walk of about an hour from our home. Having no notion of seeing the empress, I had undertaken the jaunt just as I was, sturdy clothes, thick schoolboy boots that were all dusty upon my arrival, and a face none too clean. I was undoubtedly a sight to be presented to an empress that would have driven my fastidious mother to tears.

But Madame Paulet, lady in waiting to Eugénie, seemed to have been more impressed by my height than by my informal costume.

She exclaimed, "Why, here is M. Worth's young son. How tall he is! Her Majesty must see him."

And she took me by the hand and led me, grubby urchin that I was, to the empress.

I can see Her Majesty now. Her gown with its severe bodice was of white cashmere, with a tunic of the same material trimmed with velvet about the color

of her hair. Her only jewels were her earrings. And she might have posed as a model of elegant simplicity.

She exclaimed over the contrast in my height with that of her son, who was just my age, greeted me charmingly and then, turning to Madame Paulet, said, "What a difference!" Regretfully, "If only the prince might be as tall!"

Naturally she exhausted the conversational possibilities with such a small boy in about five minutes, but nevertheless for those five minutes she was delightful.

Those two interviews were my only ones with the empress, but I saw her many times at the races, in the Bois, at the theater and in the many and sundry public places where Her Majesty might or must go. She often rode around four o'clock of an afternoon, sometimes with the prince, occasionally with the emperor, always preceded and followed by her guard. She was extremely fond of a canter around the lake. Then once I saw her skating on that idyllically situated pond with the Princesse de Metternich and two other of the ladies of the court, the quartette holding to a velvet covered rod. It was the fashion then to wear long dresses in the street, but in the country and for skating a shorter skirt was allowed. Trailing skirts did not greatly matter when women did not walk in town except to cross the

sidewalk to their carriages. The afternoon I saw the empress and her ladies of the court disporting themselves on the ice, they wore wide velvet knickers to the knees and high gaiters. Over the knickers were ballooning crinolines that reached just below the knee. Some of the costumes were trimmed with sable and others with chinchilla, and with them were worn tiny toques of velvet to match, trimmed with fur.

Everything matched in those days. The hats, cloaks, gaiters, knickers, dresses. Some in their passion to have everything in harmony carried the vogue to extremes. I remember one woman, neither pretty nor longer young, for whom my father made a dress of black velvet with orange polka dots. One day after my father had forgotten the spotted outrage, she entered the shop, wearing it with shoes, hat, gloves, sunshade and all to match!

Undoubtedly photographs of that royal skating party with its buoyant crinolines and knickers would arouse unholy mirth in the twentieth-century athletes of the ice. Certainly pictures of other crinolines appall us by their size. But it must always be remembered that no matter what the fashion, certain women will always overdo it. And a normal crinoline, worn by some one who knew how to wear clothes, like Madame de

Metternich, Madame de Morny and particularly the empress, had a graceful elegance and enhanced subtly the distinction of its wearer.

The crinoline incidentally took the place of the exaggerated "bouffantes." The width of the skirts had increased until, when the hoop skirt was introduced, the number of petticoats — the upper two always starched, to boardlike stiffness! — required to support their enormous yardage assumed alarming proportions and weight. Physicians criticized the mode severely, as it caused women with child to faint dangerously under the strain of merely wearing their clothes.

I think it was about 1860 that an English inventor brought a cashmere petticoat, mounted on three steel or whalebone hoops, to my father. As this contrivance gave the skirts the fashionable spread without the enormous number of petticoats, my father saw its possibilities at once and proceeded to introduce it. It was seized upon with rejoicing by the overburdened women, and soon petticoats, with the exception of one or two of muslin, beautifully made, that showed as an exquisite lacy froth when their wearers stepped, were abandoned. With the petticoat of hoops the skirts were no longer limited as to width, and it was soon understood that the more voluminous the crinoline the more elegant

the effect. At last the ultimate in smartness was to have a crinoline so huge that one could not pass through a doorway.

Not all women, however, regarded the crinoline as something with which to prevent egress. There was, par example, the Queen of Madagascar. One day the empress sent for my father and said, "M. Worth, we are getting together certain gifts for the Queen of Madagascar. His Majesty is sending her a number of things and wishes to include among them two dresses in the European fashion."

My father made a velvet of vivid red, embroidered in silver, and another of green embroidered in white pearls and gold, both extremely décolleté. Naturally he included the crinoline in red and green cashmere, as without the steel frames to support them the dresses would have been at least twenty-five centimeters too long.

The Queen of Madagascar received the dresses eventually and sent immediately for the French ambassador who had brought them, in order to thank him. When he arrived, he found Her Majesty waiting under a tree, barefooted, but attired in the magnificent red velvet, and above her in a tree hung the crinoline, as a red cashmere canopy!

Oh, those hoop skirts of the sixties! My first authentic emotion was awakened by a lovely voice and an enormous crinoline that could not have possibly passed through the door of a carriage. It was when I was five and hearing and seeing Adelina Patti in "Martha" for the first time. I was bewitched. Later she doffed the crinoline, and appeared in a tailored costume of red velvet, trimmed with rabbit ermine, her servant wearing the same model in another color. These clothes remained with me for years as the ultimate in sartorial perfection. To-day, alas, they would only excite ridicule.

When I was older, perhaps eight or nine, I saw an excellently staged revue at the Châtelet, called "Dancing, from Adam and Eve to Our Time." In that exposition of the light fantastic the comic relief was supplied by a couple in Empire dress, the lady wearing a narrow gown, and a poke bonnet with strings tied under the chin, faintly similar to those worn to-day. No clown could have succeeded better than these dancers. Their slinky costumes were such a monstrous contrast to the familiar tentlike crinoline that the audience gave one gasp and became hysterical. I am afraid that the present silhouette reminds me of nothing so much as that female dancer in her tight dress and her

ridiculous umbrella capering across the stage while the people rocked with laughter.

The laughter of that audience was shrewd comment on the evanescence of styles. The mode of the 1770's, as revived by those dancers, had as much to recommend it as the crinoline in some of its manifestations, but because it was out of fashion it aroused only mirth.

Realizing this tendency of the styles of another generation to amuse, I have always been careful, when designing a dress for a portrait, to make one that will not "date." For this reason, the dresses I supplied for the models M. Dagnan Boureret used in his paintings do not, to-day, attract attention for any lack of modernity.

My father was one of the first to recognize this danger and avoid it by using period costumes, reminiscent of old pictures, for portraits. To day, for instance, the painting of George Fendeau's mother, in her Worth gown of pearl-gray satin tucked up over a blue satin skirt after the fashion of Belle Gabrielle, still presents a certain modishness and grace. While the portrait of "La Dame au Gant" by the same artist, now hanging in the Luxembourg, expresses the period better perhaps, it is completely out of fashion, and sartorially it is only a curiosity.

My daughter, who was only seventeen when she had the much discussed portrait in black painted, sacrificed the then fashionable display of her figure and lovely neck and arms in order that the artist might paint an "ageless" picture as well as get the subtle, somber touch he wanted. I told her it was for the artist to choose the costume as well as the complementary tones for his background, and not for the model to say, "But purple is not becoming to me. You must n't use purple," for it is the artist who sees the "ensemble." This portrait brought the painter twenty-four orders for similar ones. Everyone suddenly wanted her likeness handed down to posterity in a filmy black dress.



INVENTING A NEW CONCEIT



Around 1866 or 1867 my father came to the conclusion that crinoline was becoming absurd. For one thing, the enormous amount of material gathered across the front deformed the figure, and for another, the twelve great pleats, six in front and six in the back, by which the skirt was attached to the bodice, stiffened the feminine silhouette and robbed it of any charm. Therefore, he decided to remove the quantity of material bunched at the waist and make the skirts narrower, at least at the top. To do this he invented the gored skirt, so cut that it fitted the figure snugly at the waist and yet at the hem was as wide as a giant lampshade.

He was much pleased with this conceit and made it up for a charming English lady to whom it was most becoming. The empress soon heard of the sensation the model was creating and asked to see it.

As has been said, Her Majesty not only never initiated a fashion but was exceedingly reluctant to adopt new ideas, even after they were on the road to popularity. She also clung passionately to her likes and dislikes. When she became attached to a trimming, she wanted it on all her new dresses. When she liked a certain color or design, she never wanted to supplant it with something new. There was nothing in her of the type of woman who cries, "Oh, but I can't have a ribbon on my dress this year, I had a ribbon on a frock last spring." Yet in spite of her faithfulness to the established order, when she saw the famous "flat" dress on the demoiselle de magazin she gave an involuntary exclamation of delight. But hardly had she uttered it before she veiled her eyes at the very thought of being th first to wear a dress that was to her impudique (indecent) — or at least "undressed", on account of its "flat" front. This, in spite of the fact that my father had taken care to hide the front with a sort of fringed drapery with two long, loose ends, and thus avoid any clearly defined outline of the stomach.

The Empress at length unveiled her eyes and told my father, "That dress is perfect. I could n't imagine anything lovelier," adding even, "It looks like a Tanagra! But," with a little shiver, "I could never wear it. Ask



COMTESSE J... DE C..... IN A SECOND EMPIRE DRESS FOR THE EMPIRE BALL GIVEN BY PRINCESSE MURAT



MME. DE BENARDAKI IN A FANCY DRESS IMPROVISED IN A FEW HOURS IN 1890

Note lacing of waist

Madame de Metternich or Madame de Pourtalès to launch it. And once it is no longer an 'extravagant model' I will let myself be tempted, and you shall make a similar one for me." This, of course, was done. How different from to-day were the fashions of the sixties and the women who wore them!

Perhaps the loveliest dress my father made for Eugénie was the one intended for the opening of the 1867 Exhibition, and which was never worn. The material, a magnificent dull faille of lemon color with a pattern of pompadour flower clusters, reminiscent of Spanish shawls, had been especially woven at Lyons. Alençon — real, of course — and bows of pastel lavender satin trimmed it. When it was finished, my father took me to the Tuileries to deliver it to the empress. And as he spread its silken beauty before her, she gave a little rapturous cry at such loveliness. But that night she received word that Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, had been made a prisoner, and she felt that under the circumstances she should not appear robed in so much brilliance. And the dress was foresworn.

It was in this year of the Exhibition and the abortive debut of the faille gown that the emperor and empress gave a great ball. The night of the gayety my father

went to the Tuileries at the last minute in order to deliver Her Majesty's dress and take care of all the important last touches himself. My brother and I accompanied him.

When the Empress learned that Gaston and I were there, she told my father that in case we cared to stay to see the grand entrée into the Salle des Maréchaux, Madame Paulet would take us to the gallery. Nothing, of course, could have kept us from following Madame Paulet.

It was the great vision of my life, this procession. At its head was the Empress in white tulle and silver and diamonds, led by the Czar of Russia. Next came the Grand Duchess Marie in white and gold tulle with a red tunic, escorted by the Emperor. And third, the Princesse Mathilde accompanied by the King of Prussia.

This defile of majesties marched to a great canopied stand large enough to accommodate the necessary number of thrones at one end of the hall, to await the dancing of the first quadrille. It seemed to me as though all the crowned heads of the world were under that royal canopy that evening. Even Tai Kun, brother of the Emperor of Japan, was there in his official costume, that of a Samurai.

A Japanese prince of the sixties was a vastly different [58]

person from the "Europeanized" oriental of to-day and a thousand times more picturesque. At the royal ball in 1867 Tai Kun wore oriental trousers of some glittering material, and over those a tunic with the wide Japanese sleeves. The imperial coat of arms was embroidered on the back and on the front, and it was belted with a wide girdle into which were stuck five or six small swords or daggers. One end of the sash that sheathed the daggers passed between his legs and ended in a train about five feet long. He wore the traditional sandals and stockings with the great toe divided from the others. And on his head was the tiny flat cap - seen in so many Japanese prints with a chin strap. On top of this headgear was a stalk-like affair about a foot and a half high, from which a long black ribbon fell to the end of his train.

After the first quadrille the royal entourage left the Salle des Maréchaux and descended to the garden by way of steps garlanded and adorned for the occasion. (This garden is still in existence along the Rue des Tuileries, but at that time it was enclosed.) Red and green Bengal lights flashed as their majesties appeared, and the whole garden was illuminated. The lights, the jewels, the bright dresses with their voluminous, fragile skirts, the beautiful women, some of whom, like the

empress, were "majestuous" and in their grace of movement rivaled any swan, formed a scene that may be imagined, but cannot be described!

The Duchesse de Morny, who had been in retirement since the death of her husband in 1865, made her first official appearance that night since her period of mourning. My father had made a delightful semi-mourning dress, in tulle of course, and very plain, for her to wear. A few real diamonds trimmed the bodice, and pearls were clasped around her neck. With this she wore a tiny tulle cap by the way of a widow's bonnet, trimmed with diamonds in the shape of a diadem. She was very slim and, in her tulle and diamonds, fairylike. As for the rest, I was so fascinated by the empress and two or three of the other ladies that I have forgotten them. I was only eleven years old.

In appearance Eugénie was the loveliest of women; in manner she could seem the most charming — if it so pleased her! — but her real self was cool, aloof and preferred to make all human contacts from the steps of her throne. As a result she was treated with anxious deference and obsequious respect by all who approached her.

My father, however, was permitted to glimpse one moment of unbending on her part, fugitive though it

was, and was in a way the object of her fleeting thoughtfulness. He had invited Mr. Allenby, his first London employer, to be with him as his guest during the Exhibition. And one day at the Tuileries, after he had completed putting the finishing touches on several of the dresses destined to be worn at the grand gala, and while he was waiting at the request of the empress, he saw an opportunity of pleasing his first chief. Eugénie was fastening the usual bunch of violets - the imperial flowers of which she always had an abundance in her dressing room — in her belt, when a few slipped from the cluster to the carpet. My father, stepping forward, asked, "Might I have those, your Majesty?" indicating the scattered blossoms. "I should like to give them to Mr. Allenby, my old chief in London. I cannot begin to tell you how much he would treasure them as a souvenir of his visit to Paris."

Eugénie smiled, and taking the whole bunch from her belt, said, "Pray, M. Worth, give these to your guest, since you say that they will please him so much."

In memory of that gracious gesture my father sent the empress a great bunch of violets each year, beginning with the one of her banishment and ceasing with the one of her death, as is related in the De Metternich Memoirs.

I did not have the opportunity of seeing Her Majesty at the great gala in 1867, but I did witness her reception of the sultan. The streets were lined with soldiers, presenting arms, from the Gare de Lyons to the Tuileries. The sultan was met at the station by the emperor and driven through this pomp to the Place de Carousel where he alighted and together with the emperor ascended the steps to where the empress waited at the top. She appeared remarkably graceful that day, and, as I remember, was wearing lilac. I can see even yet the uncomprising certainty of that shade, for Eugénie hated any color that was not definite. Lilac must be lilac, green must be green, blue must be blue. One of her cherished tints was water green. My father, who rather liked colors that were illusive and enticed the onlooker into wondering whether they might be mauve or mulberry, had considerable difficulty with his royal customer on this account. His task was not lessened by the fact that it was a day when bright colors ruled, rather than the modern navy blue and black, and few shades appeared to be what they seemed. Brilliant hues were worn even at the races. For instance, the empress would attend dressed in a lilac crêpe trimmed with Valenciennes, or a pearl-gray organdie - exquisite with her Titian coloring and lace. Too, I remember

my mother wearing a purple dress and a leghorn hat adorned with a bird of paradise. It was the day of bright splendor.

A few days after the imposing arrival of the sultan there was a great reception at the Palais de l'Industrie during which the prizes were distributed. Their majesties, the sultan and several of the ladies in waiting were stationed in the middle of the hall under a canopy of red velvet. The empress wore her great diadem, the one that had a special guard to take it to and from the Treasury upon those great days requiring its appearance. The empress seldom wore these rarest jewels of the crown, as she considered them too great a responsibility, and only brought them out when the occasion compelled. The dress she had considered a fitting complement to those glorious jewels was of white tulle with an allover embroidery of silver ears. It was very long and exceedingly full, and the hem of the tunic was finished in silver scallops. In each of these scallops was embroidered a cluster of ears. Paillets or sequins had not been discovered at that time, but the embroidery was done in "lames" which glittered tremendously in the light.

My father had prepared a most elaborate and magnificent dress for Her Majesty to wear at the official

dinner at the Russian Embassy. But on the very day of the affair a Pole fired a shot at the czar during the great review in honor of His Majesty, shouting, "Vive la Pologne," and the empress, who was greatly shocked as, indeed, was all Paris, felt that a costume less flamboyant would be more in keeping with her mood. Therefore, as soon as she returned to the Tuileries, she had Madame Paulet call my father. Apprised of Her Majesty's desire, he sent for white tulle with a tracery of tiny silver stitches and he covered one of her simpler dresses with a series of three skirts like the dress of a dancing girl. With this, in order to offset any debutante aspect, Eugénie wore the great ribbon of the Legion of Honor. And instead of the great diadem with the long ropes of pearls she had the "Regent" affixed to a little Greek diadem. When the emperor came in to see her, he congratulated my father upon his resource and skill in making a dress in two hours that would be more in keeping with the prevailing mood than the original festal garment. It was no small task, but then my father was no ordinary couturier to be vanquished by a royal and diplomatic emergency.

The homage that my father gave the empress was not that of the sycophant. While she was in power he asked no honor of her; after her banishment he was



J. P. WORTH AS AN INDIAN RAJAH
A costume made in twenty four hours





J. P. WORTH AS A SOLDIER IN 1877 AND AS A "NEGATIVE", IN WHITE EVENING SUIT, BLACK GLOVES, TIE AND SHIRT, COPIED IN ALL THE REVUES OF THAT PERIOD

loyalty itself. Perhaps the truest thing in the Memoirs of the Princesse de Metternich and one for which I am grateful to her is her statement that "M. Worth was even more devoted to the Empress after the fall of the Empire than before. And it is a pity that those who really owed their position to the Empire did not follow his example!"

Eugénie, like all great beauties, was spoiled, but undoubtedly her very aloofness under her outer manner of pleasing amiability made her appearance more striking. Before her exile, her culture was, like that of all women of her time, not excluding the duchesses of Spain, distinctly superficial. After her banishment she came to know the meaning of life better and to understand people. Then, too, she studied and, with years, gained cleverness.

About fifteen years after the War of 1870 my father visited the Isle of Wight and, being so near, went to pay his respects to his banished empress. She received him with all kindliness and a true graciousness in her winter garden, a strange place, filled with bamboo-like plants from the land where her son had been killed.

The last time I saw her in public was at the opera, magnificent in blue, with ropes of pearls and a Greek diadem with the "Regent" in her fair and famous hair.

During the Empire the Rue de la Paix was at its utmost magnificence. Every Friday great ladies drove through it on their way to the Bois in gowns elaborate enough for ball dresses and trimmed with miles of Valenciennes. They rode in open carriages, with footmen in powdered wigs and breeches of satin. Madame Musard, daughter-in-law of the famous Musard of the opera balls, whose fortune came from oil discovered on American land given her by the King of Holland in a moment of liberality, appeared in particularly splendid specimens of the carriage maker's art. These were always lined with white satin and drawn by the most magnificent horses procurable. Once this lady created a great scandal by coming to Worth's, dressed in a mannish suit and driving a mail coach, fourin-hand. She sat quite alone on the box with her two lackeys behind and two outriders following with fresh horses to replace those she tired. Between her masculine attire and her horsemanship, she blocked traffic that day in the Rue de la Paix, for Anglomania in dress and sports had not yet attacked Frenchwomen — as it did later under the influence of Queen Alexandra, then Princess of Wales - and the mannish habit adopted by Englishwomen for the hunt was something new in Paris.

A CENTURY OF FASHION Q

In addition to her "Dorsay", with its lining of white satin, she had a "Deaumont" in which she always appeared on great gala days, such as those devoted to the Grand Prix. On these occasions her lackeys wore vivid jade-green liveries and powdered wigs. As she was supposed to have what is popularly known as "a past", she was not, of course, admitted to the tribunes. She was always wonderfully dressed, both at the races and the opera, and never appeared in the same gown twice. And her jewels were equal in magnificence to her horses. They were in sets, as was the fashion at the time, and every Friday she would send her emeralds or her rubies to our workshop to be sewn on her bodices as trimming. She was the first to wear her hair in waved "bandeaux" bound with a string of diamonds. The last touch to this coiffure, and one which I am compelled to say was found quite absurd, was a diamond crescent placed so that it stood upright above her forehead. She was a beautiful woman. splendidly made, of the statuesque, Diana type, and, of course, greatly admired.

However, the great majority of the feminine arbiters of elegance, not being so extravagant as Madame Musard, were content with their Dorsays. A "Dorsay" — no great lady dared to be without one then — was

[67]

an eight-spring brougham lined with bright satin or, more soberly, in white or pearl gray. It was the universal carriage of fashion.

During the first years of the Empire it was very difficult to meet the empress except at the great receptions. Her Mondays were perhaps the most exclusive. And those she did receive were seldom, if ever, foreigners. Nevertheless, a certain Mexican grande dame, a Mrs. Erazu, who was extremely smart and the possessor of many magnificent carriages elaborately emblazoned, was admitted to the Tuileries. Both she and her daughters were models of elegance. Every Friday we sent her one, two or three new dresses for the Opera, and every Tuesday — or was it Thursday? — one for the Italiens, not taking into account those other dresses ordered from time to time for special occasions.

She provided a striking element in both the social life of the Empire and the House of Worth for a rather peculiar reason. One day she came to my father and said, "M. Worth, I have made a vow to Notre Dame du Mont Carmel never to wear silk again, but always to dress in brown wool."

Extraordinarily enough, she meant it. It was an amazing caprice that taxed my father's ingenuity to

the utmost, but he never failed her. Ball dresses, day dresses, dinner dresses, everything, was made for her in *lainage* of brown. He had a heavy tulle, baréges, and such fabrics woven especially for her at Lyons in order that she might keep her vow.

In the middle of the sixties, that great decade of the Empire, my mother succumbed to an attack of bronchitis. My father sent her to Cannes for the winter, and when she returned she was wholly well, although she never would believe thereafter that her lungs were n't delicate. After this illness my father did not permit her to resume her work in the shop, and we had a series of demoiselles de magazin, as mannequins were called in my youth.

Like the great majority of current words and phrases in the popular speech, the word "mannequin", was launched by a journalist who visited our shop. He had come with a client to see a Directoire costume that was to be sent abroad. His companion, wanting to see the effect of the dress when worn, asked that it be put on one of the saleswomen. A vendeuse, with a figure the same as that of the distant customer's, being an obliging soul, gladly donned the dress. And the reporter from La Vie Parisienne promptly went away and wrote an article about the "Entrée de Mlle."

A CENTURY OF FASHION

Mannequin." It was the first time any one had ever dared to call a demoiselle de magazin a mannequin. What would have happened had my mother been the saleswoman can well be imagined.

It is impossible not to write at length of my mother when on the subject of the House of Worth. In the beginning she was my father's inspiration. And in the end she was the shop's social celebrity. No customer ever treated her as a *fournisseur* and many, delighted by her grace and charm, claimed her as a friend. The Princesse Anna Murat, betrothed of the Duc de Morny, insisted that my mother attend her wedding.

Princesse Anna Murat was a descendant of the famous Murat who married Caroline, sister of Napoleon the First and a niece of the emperor. She was a decided favorite with their majesties and accompanied the empress everywhere. Her marriage with the Duc de Morny had been much desired, as the emperor had been most anxious to establish relations with the Faubourg St. Germain. A number of the Orleanists or legitimists had already been drawn to the Tuileries and had attended the "Mondays" of the empress. The emperor considered that the Princesse Anna's marriage to one of them would strengthen these ties.



COMTESSE DE POURTALES



MARQUISE DE JAUCOURT IN A SECOND EMPIRE DRESS See picture of Empress Eugénie

The princess was fair, with a pretty face somewhat resembling that of the Comtesse Pourtalès, spoken of as the loveliest woman of the period. She was rather fat; but as no hips could be too wide at that time, that did not matter. The main thing then was to have beautiful shoulders and a lovely bust - and show them! Her wedding was attended and glorified by the emperor and empress and unusually brilliant. How well I remember the dress my mother wore! It was of silvergray faille with a scalloped hem, very long and very full. Her scarf was tulle and the brim of her white tulle bonnet was filled with "Maréchal Niel" rosebuds. On the left side a small black aigrette made an accent. Others, of course, were more elaborately gowned, but my father had wanted my mother to be distinguished by an elegant simplicity. The ladies of the court appeared in dresses that were decidedly décolleté. But that was very much the custom at that time, irrespective of the hour. I remember that at the distribution of the prizes at the Exhibition of 1867 all the ladies of the court wore embroidered tulle dresses at two o'clock in the afternoon, which glinted with diamonds and were cut as low as possible.

In addition to her absorbing interest in my father

and her work, her many friends and social obligations, my mother found ample time to be most loving and solicitous about her children. If occasionally her affection manifested itself in ways highly painful, as in the case of the clothes she sometimes designed and the curls she created with a scorching iron, it was not because she had not the most anxious and hovering heart.

At least one of her darlings must have been a trial to her, for at the school that punctuated her ministrations, I am afraid I was not the most serious of students. During school hours I was busier reproducing the silhouettes of Madame Nilsson or Marie Favart, whom I had seen during my vacation at the opera or the Théâtre Français, than in translating my Greek and Latin. My books were filled with designs and caricatures. As for my dictionaries, they resembled medieval prayer books with margins dedicated to wreaths of roses, angels, saints and martyrs. They were covered with profiles, balloons and bicycles. To be brief, I was a very bad pupil, as my imagination was entranced with things entirely outside of the school-room.

At ten years of age I was already designing dresses, [72]

and a certain Polish lady even asked to buy one drawing of mine. Is it any wonder, having known nothing from my birth but crinolines and laces, velvets and tulle, dresses half made and finished ready to be worn by a queen, frivolous dresses for famous courtesans and nunlike dresses for brides, that I became a *couturier*?

With my knack for drawing, I should undoubtedly have studied to be a painter, had I not loved my father so. But the thought that I might do other than follow in his footsteps never occurred to me. Besides, to aspire to become a painter seemed to me so bold, so absurd, so pretentious an ambition that I never dared to express my wish in the matter. Not that my father was not very much interested and pleased with my designs. He was, but not enough to encourage me in the study of this fine art.

However, when I was about fourteen years old, I had the good fortune to become acquainted with the great landscape painter, Corot. He was a friend of a friend of ours, and came occasionally to dine with us at our home. In time we came to know him intimately, and one day, during the War of 1870, my mother who, like all mothers, believed her children full of genius, was bold enough to say to him, "My dear friend, it

would be most kind of you if you would allow my son Philippe, who shows some talent for drawing, to come to you on Sundays and advise him about his work."

And thus it was that while Paris was besieged, I began those wonderful Sundays with Corot that were worth at least fifteen years' actual experience in my profession to me.



FOUNDATION OF THE WORTH FORTUNE



My father had no prescience that it would be good business — as we say to day when buying a picture — for him to invest heavily in the paintings of his friend Corot. Notoriously impractical, after the fashion of men of talent, the idea of speculating on M. Corot's ability never entered his head and his purchases of the masterpieces that are to day worth millions were discreetly limited. I regret this lack of foresight, not because of the monetary consideration, but because I love Corot before any other of the great painters, and I much prefer the little sketches, in his first manner, which hang in my home in the Rue E'mile Deschanel, to his great pictures, which recently sold for fabulous sums.

Intimacy with this master landscape painter during my formative years focussed my whole life. From the

[75]

practical standpoint it crystallized my flair for drawing into a facility with my pencil that later was one of my greatest assets. For my sketch of some design would convey my idea and wishes far better and more quickly than a thousand words. Was n't it Napoleon who declared, so rightly, that the roughest drawing is much plainer than a world of description. Then from the ethical viewpoint, this friendship with Corot, matured in those long Sunday afternoons in his studio, where I did more listening than drawing, taught me artistic honesty and to hearken to my conscience.

Those who know only his work cannot realize the scrupulousness of the man. One day he said to one of my predecessors in his studio, "It is not so much nature that I wish to paint. It is rather that I wish to put on canvas the deep emotions with which she inspires me." And once he explained to me, "My dear child, above all, be conscientious. Have a sense of value. In painting a landscape you must fasten the soul of nature on canvas just as you would that of a human model, if your landscape were a portrait. If your subject is a mountain you must not be content, as many painters are, to photograph, as it were, the scene with your brush. Your hand must be so faithful, and your insight so great that you translate the majesty of that mountain, as well as its outline, into paint."

A CENTURY OF FASHION

He always delivered himself of these golden rules of painting with an air of candor that corresponded admirably with his touching simplicity. Perhaps the greatest of his precepts was embodied in the advice given a young artist who had presented one of his canvases for criticism. Corot looked at the effort a moment and then said slowly, "Dear child, it is very good — very good indeed. But it is just a painting. Nature is not painted. In this picture you show your anxiety to do thus and so, as you have seen it done. You paint with what you have been taught. You should paint with your heart, with your soul. Your brain and your eyes should wait upon your emotions and your artistic conscience."

What a lesson! It should be engraved in gold on marble in all the schools of painting.

Corot taught me to know and love art and to-day I am surrounded by it in the many manifestations that bring joy to me and all who cross my threshold because of his gracious influence.

While I was growing up under the guidance of this benign man, my father was finding the bitter among the sweets of success. The clientele created at Gagelin's followed him, and this, augmented by the patronage of Eugénie and her court, soon so filled the shop in Rue de la Paix that he was hard put to it to find time and space in which to execute orders. All of which excited

untold envy among his rivals. Certain of these assumed virtues and professed to be outraged that a man should be present at fittings — this, in spite of the fact that women were infinitely more prudently clad at a fitting than at a ball. This Puritanical demand for modesty, borrowed for the occasion, was without precedent, for up to the time of Louis XIV, couturiers and even corsetiers had always been men, women dressmakers only coming into fashion after the reign of that monarch.

The upshot of this propaganda was a libelous article describing at length a newly established dressmaking firm, which was being used as a peep show by the men about town and whose director was a young man who received people with a "calotte grecque" on his head and his feet on the chimney piece. Nothing could have been farther from the truth, for my mother, the shyest and most conservative of women, never was out of the shop, and my father's great reserve and severe dignity, — he never succumbed even to that mildest dissipation, a cigarette — were well known. But, in spite of that, the article caused a stir, and my poor mother was beside herself. We could do nothing legally, as the writer had cunningly omitted the name of the firm, although he had described it well enough.

Fortunately, one of our clients at the time was Madame de Girardin, wife of Emile de Girardin, the journalist, and my mother had the happy thought of consulting her.

Madame Girardin, who was rather delicate and stayed much at home, had asked my father to superintend the decorating of the room in which she was compelled to spend most of her life, and this my father had gladly done and with immeasurable success. Thus it was natural that the first to whom my mother turned when the cabal against my father came to a head in this article, was the woman who had shown such marked faith in her husband's gifts. Rushing to Madame de Girardin in tears, she related the whole story and asked what might be done. M. de Girardin, who was in the room during the despairing recital, answered, "Dear child, don't worry. They are simply hoisting your husband to the top of the ladder. Don't say anything about it. Don't make any answer. There is none that could be made, that would help matters. Just let it go and see what happens."

My mother left them, comforted, and wisely resolved to play the waiting game. And a few days later the man responsible for the article who, incidentally, lived in the same building with us — on the floor above, in

fact — had my father approached to ascertain whether he would be willing to pay thirty thousand francs to have the article refuted and an exceedingly complimentary one published in its place!

It is interesting to record that, during this first success, with its attendant glory and notoriety, the first of the materials especially made for Worth was the famous brocade with eyes and ears, worn by Queen Elizabeth in the portrait that had so fascinated my father, as a boy in London. Through some oversight the first he ordered was made only with the eyes, when it should have had both eyes and ears. Therefore, some ten or fifteen years later, my father had the pattern made again, this time accurately in a new material, velours au sabare, of the sort that was woven under Louis XVI, but not so fine in quality. It was his way of paying tender tribute to the shrine of his boyhood. Poor lad, deprived of the sports and joys that are the common heritage of boyhood, this painted glory was the one glamorous experience of his childhood.

During the War of 1870 the House of Worth closed and the workrooms were converted into emergency wards, to receive the overflow from the hospitals. We took cases of pneumonia, dysentery and all the diseases



J. P. WORTH AS THE SHAH OF PERSIA, EMPLOY-ING THE FAMOUS STUFF WITH EYES AND EARS



J. P. WORTH AS CAPULET IN "ROMEO AND JULIET"



The lady who wore spring dresses in winter during the War of 1870 because the firm of Worth was closed

A CENTURY OF FASHION

that follow in the path of war, and were greatly saddened by the death of several soldiers committed to our care hopelessly ill. It was a dreadful time.

Our closing during the siege of Paris brought many a touching proof of the allegiance of our clients. One of these was the Marquise de Manzanedo, who came to us around 1865 or 1866, shortly after her marriage, and remained loyal to us and our traditions until the day of her death. During that bitter winter of 1870 she startled society by appearing in summer dresses of muslin. At last one of her friends demanded, "But, my dear Marquise, why are you wearing summer dresses in December?"

The Marquise answered, "But Paris is closed. Worth is closed. How can I have any new dresses made?"

As soon as the war was ended we were flooded with orders from London and America, and during the Commune we found it exceedingly difficult to make shipments. Ah, that troubled time! On March 22 we witnessed a scene of senseless brutality. The Communards had built a barricade at the corner of the Place Vendôme where it crosses the Rue des Capucines. A delegation of peaceful citizens, wearing the blue

ribbon of conciliation, approached them and asked, civilly, that they take away the gun they had trained on the Rue de la Paix and retire, so that business might continue unhindered.

The Communards answered this overture by a fusillade, and twenty innocent people were killed. The bodies of these were left where they fell and lay in the street for forty-eight hours. My father, anticipating some such trouble, had given instructions that the door of his shop be left open. Half an hour after his order, about three hundred people took refuge in our shop, including one of the wounded, who died a few minutes later. We were able to save the lives of a few by helping them escape through the Rue Volney.

After this the rebels wanted my brother, Gaston, then only seventeen, to enlist with them and, in order to avoid his being compelled to join the revolutionists, we left Paris. We had to quit the house in the Rue de la Paix separately, so as not to arouse suspicion, and met at the Gare St. Lazare, where we took a train for Havre.

The period succeeding the war, particularly those years of M. Thiers' tenure as president, in so far as social brilliance was concerned, was exceedingly bourgeois. Sons had been killed, brothers and fathers were among the missing, money had depreciated, and the

mood was one of depression and sorrow. Then, too, the woman to whom all looked for leadership was no longer young or socially ambitious. Madame Thiers had been a very beautiful woman in the forties, thirty years before, when Mlle. Dosne. And even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century a hint of her former loveliness remained in her still beautiful shoulders and splendid carriage. She came to us every year for the gowns which she wore to the dinners and receptions at the Elysée. These usually were of black, exquisitely embroidered and very simple. But as her frocks were merely the background for her famous pearl necklace — sold two or three years ago, for five or six million francs - she could afford to have them unassuming. This string of pearls, incidentally, was so splendid that it became part of the collection in the Galerie d'Appollon in the Palais du Louvre, where it remained for almost fifty years prior to this recent sale.

My studies, interrupted by the War of 1870 and the terror of the Commune, were resumed with the Thiers' administration and peace. In 1872 my education was again halted, this time by a severe illness and a tedious convalescence. Because of these two interruptions I did not pass my examinations until I was nineteen. At last, however, I attained my baccalaureate, and felt as

though I had been released from prison. How well I remember coming home and burning all my school-books! The day following that upon which I received my degree, I was made a full-fledged employé of my father's firm. There was no interlude for adjustment, for looking things over; no discussion of any other career; indeed, no thought of one. In so far as our family was concerned, our destiny was a foregone conclusion. I am sure that my father, who, with all his kindness, was a decided despot, never dreamed that my brother and myself might aspire to be other than couturiers. Nor did we.

Curiously enough, there was never a word spoken about our entering the business. Neither Gaston or I ever said, "Father, I think I should like to go into the shop with you." Nor did he ever say to us, "My sons, now that you are grown, I should like to have you come into this business that I have built up, and carry it on." Never a suggestion of anything like that. We simply went to work with him as sheep enter the pen, and with about as much self-determination. How could we have done anything else, born as we were in the business, surrounded by its problems, steeped in its traditions, and adoring the man who, for all his gentleness, held but two above him in authority, God and the emperor?

A CENTURY OF FASHION

I left the shop for one year shortly after my installation to serve my *volontariat*. My brother came for me while I was selling a dress, and told me I must be at the barracks at five o'clock, and to turn my customer over to some one else. My resumption of my post was done with almost as much expedition. The year following I left service on the evening of October 31, and on the morning of November 1, at half-past nine I was back on the job once more, never again to leave it.

My brother and I took up our permanent posts around 1874. To Gaston fell the business end of the shop. The man who had been in charge of this department and who had been with my father since 1858 retired and Gaston took his place. There he remained for twenty years as manager and chief cashier. No one, both in temperament and aptitude, could have been better suited for the task.

Extraordinary as it may seem, it was not until my brother began to take an active interest in the firm that we began to invest and build up a capital. The management of the moneys had been left entirely to the old cashier; and my father had simply spent each year the money he had made the year before. It never occurred to him that later he might want to retire and live on his capital, and instead of investing any surplus, he

would leave it in his safe until he had accumulated perhaps four or five hundred thousand francs—a hundred thousand dollars—and then he would say, "Now I shall be able to build something at Suresnes." Our place at Suresnes was his passion. He spent eight hundred thousand francs on its buildings alone, of which to day not one brick remains. This statement is made in no spirit of deprecating my father or his financial methods. He was simply an artist, with no understanding of money matters.

Gaston put a stop to this haphazardness and soon had the firm organized on as sound, solid and conservative a basis as a bank. He pointed out to my father how absurd it was to leave money lying idle in his safe, not even drawing interest, and prevailed upon him to put it to work. This my father did, and under the prudent guidance of my brother invested to such good purpose that he left quite a fortune when he died. It was not large in comparison with modern riches, but it enabled my mother to continue to live as she had during the last ten or fifteen years of her husband's life, and to be without anxiety or preoccupation.

It should be noted here that the wealth he acquired did not come from the shop in the Rue de la Paix. Had



J. P. WORTH
About 1908



GASTON WORTH

Brother and partner of J. P. Worth and father of the present partners





C. F. WORTH, FROM A MINIATURE MADE ABOUT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH

C. F. WORTH IN 1858 WHEN HE STARTED THE BUSINESS

he not made investments in other than his own business, our inheritance would have been very little. For it must not be thought that fortunes are made in a single business, particularly in that of making dresses.

For instance, there is a colleague of mine who retired last year with an enormous fortune, and although the world knew him first as the proprietor of a lingerie shop and later of a dressmaking establishment, this accumulation came from neither lingerie nor dresses. It came chiefly from his shrewd investments in pictures and works of art! When he sold his art gallery about ten years ago, it created almost as great a sensation in the world as the latest international scandal and brought him about fourteen million francs, whereas it had probably cost him approximately two millions. In addition to his pictures he had bought shares in the Suez Canal at the right moment, acted upon other tips on the market and had the good fortune to have a father who bought land in the suburbs of Paris at four or five francs a meter, which to-day is worth four or five hundred francs. Naturally the original capital with which he had speculated came from his dressmaking business, but it can readily be seen that nine tenths of his fortune did not come from that business. In addition, inciden-

tally, to his great fortune, he will leave behind him a collection of books and works of art second only to that which he sold a decade ago and which, in all probability, will go to the State.

Another instance! We had a woman in our shop who began with us at three francs a day. In time she was made first seamstress - premier d'atelier - and assigned the making of Empress Eugénie's dresses. With age she retired and such had been her thrift that when her daughter married she was able to give her a "dot" of three hundred thousand francs or at that time, about sixty thousand dollars. It was no mean sum for a seamstress, even a premier d'atelier to acquire. But the supposition that hers were ill-gotten gains must not be considered for a moment. She was as honest as the day is long and worked like a horse. The explanation is quite simple: In her contacts with our customers she received many tips on the market and much interesting financial information, and invested wisely, among other securities, in Suez and Petit Journal that later became fabulous in value. She had to economize greatly, of course, in order to buy the shares that were to make her wealthy, but after twenty years of economy and fortunate speculations, it was quite possible for her to endow her daughter with sixty thousand dollars.

A CENTURY OF FASHION

My brother was of the same caliber as my art-collecting friend and our old *premier d'atelier*. Although conservative, he always knew when to take a risk and when to invest, and soon had the House of Worth on the firm foundation of a growing capital.



LADIES AND DEMIMONDAINES



When Marshall MacMahon succeeded M. Thiers as president of France, society was revolutionized. From the sobriety and depression and dullness of the post-war era the Elysée became as brilliant a center of elegance as any royal court. It was more democratic, however, and at its receptions and dinners one might meet the wives of manufacturers and great bankers seated next to the Duchesse Doudeauville and other of the Parisian aristocracy. Men were perhaps more readily received than women; but once at a reception I had occasion to observe that in spite of this lowering of the social barriers a trifle, the Elysée quite equaled the Tuileries in magnificence and beauty. An administration could hardly have been more distinguished than M. MacMahon's.

[90]

Two of the old régime, who still maintained their great social rank in this administration, were Princesse Metternich and Duchesse de Morny. Princesse Metternich was commonly known as "La Princesse", Duchesse de Morny as "La Duchesse", and it was never considered necessary to add their names. These two were of inestimable aid to my father in revolutionizing fashion, in giving the impulse, the elan to a mode. They liked his models and were always willing to introduce them, especially "La Princesse", who was the more daring of the two. Not that his innovations ever sacrificed beauty to audacity, in styles either revived or created. Rather, compared to the present mode, they were discretion itself. In his time women would not have gone even to a fancy dress ball dressed as they are to-day. Therefore it required no great daring on the part of "La Princesse" to assist my father in his sartorial revolutions. It took so little to make one!

For example, one day during the MacMahon administration, "La Princesse" came to see my father and he asked, during the course of their talk about her frocks, "By any chance are you going to the races, to the Grand Prix to-morow?"

"No," she replied; "I have n't any dress that would do, only a black one."

A CENTURY OF FASHION Q

"A black one," he considered. "Wait, I have it," abruptly; "a parasol — a red parasol. Just what the black dress needs."

And he found and gave her a parasol of poppy red, that gay shade of the cotton umbrellas that peasants carry.

The next day "La Princesse" attended the races with her bright parasol braving a beaming sun, and set all fashionable Paris talking. Her sunshade was the palpitating subject of the day and ultimately became the rage. In the end, it was impossible to go anywhere without seeing parasols like jaunty, brilliant flowers nodding over the heads of pretty ladies. Such a thing would be impossible in this mad present. You might attend the races to-day with your boots on your head and your hat on your feet, and create no sensation!

"La Princesse" had the reputation of being unconventional to a scandalous degree. This was based in part upon her singing of "Rien n'est sacré pour un sapeur" — There's nothing sacred to a sapper — or "La Femme à Barbe" — The bearded woman — to amuse their majesties, and appearing as a première danseuse with Madame de Pourtalès in the famous "Ballet des Abeilles" given before the court. Her con-

temporaries used to shudder virtuously when they spoke of these two scandalous exhibitions. But I happen to know that "La Princesse" never lost her air of being a great lady, even when involved in these mild diversions, and modern Parisians whose skirts swing above their knees would be exceedingly disgusted with a dancing frock as long and modest - halfway between the ankle and the knee and very full - as the one she wore in the Ballet of the Bees. The skirt was of yellow, trimmed with gold; the bodice of brown velvet, embroidered with stripes of gold and with little wings at the back. Except for its décolleté, no costume could have been more discreet. After her death I was much amused to have people come to me for "technical" information about this famous princess. Compared with the outrageous escapades of the present, the prankish adventures of her highness were a nun's pastimes.

She feared nothing, talked very loud and amused everybody. It was said that she had a very sharp tongue. But I must confess frankly that I never was made aware of it. There was no situation that she could not carry off unabashed. One day she was late for a luncheon with their majesties, and when she arrived she found every one seated at the table. Most

ladies of quality would have alleged a swoon or a domestic catastrophe in explanation of the delay and to avert royal rebuke. But not "La Princesse." She sailed in with *brio*, exclaiming, "'Tis not my fault. Worth is the guilty one. I did not receive my dress in time!" The emperor and empress burst out laughing, and the incident was closed.

On the day of the Grand Gala in 1867 she booked the box to the right of the stage, which generally faced the imperial box. However, a special royal box, facing the stage, its great red velvet canopy almost touching the ceiling, had been prepared for this occasion. Inside its magnificence, probably ten thrones were in readiness on a graduated dais. Two or three minutes before the entrance of their majesties — who were always as punctual as clocks - two powdered lackeys entered Madame de Metternich's box, bearing an immense silver candelabrum holding ten lighted candles. Placing their burden carefully, they stepped back and "La Princesse", in pink tulle covered with jewels, entered in a great flurry and seated herself at the front of her box as though a giant candlestick with ten blazing tapers was the most natural thing in the world in an opera box. I believe that Madame de Pourtalès was with her. They were practically inseparable, and were splendid





DUCHESSE DE ROHAN IN LOUIS XVI COSTUME

MINERVA RÉGENCE





LADY DE GREY

MRS. ASQUITH

When J. P. Worth's mother first wore a diamond horseshoe in her hair, it took the world by storm

foils for each other. Both their beauty and scintillant wit were diametrically opposed and made them the bright, particular stars of the salons.

Madame de Metternich, or "La Princesse", was the first to wear "short" dresses. My father had observed a street sweeper with her dress tucked up in the back, forming a sort of tunic over her petticoat, and, inspired by a certain grace in the fashion, had duplicated it in velvet and satin and other luxurious materials. Madame de Metternich wore the first of these models to the races, and again started tongues wagging. And thus the famous tunic dress was born.

She was the protagonist of yet another innovation, only this time it was a color and not a mode. Shortly after Sadowa, when Bismarck was the most cordially hated man in France — and none despised him more than "La Princesse" — my father had had a new shade, a sort of brown, manufactured at Lyons, and did not know what to call it. He carried his perplexity to bed with him and dreamed about it, and the next day he told his dream to Madame de Metternich.

"Last night," he said, "I dreamt that I was showing you this material, and asked you what to call it. And you, noting the peculiar brown"—it was the color of fecal matter— "answered, 'But, call it Bismarck.'"

A CENTURY OF FASHION

Madame de Metternich laughed uproariously at this shot, and exclaimed in her stentorian tones, "Wonderful!"

And "Bismarck" it was called and went around the world under that label and no woman worthy of the name but had one Bismarck dress with bronze shoes, hat and sunshade to match as was the fashion of the period.

Madame de Metternich's boisterousness and mild eccentricities were an honest inheritance from her father, an Austrian nobleman and sportsman who was absolutely mad, literally crazy about horses. I once had occasion to visit a castle in Bohemia where his feats were immortalized in pictures. And in those he was shown jumping his horse over a cart of hay, riding up steps, jumping down from the first floor into the entrance hall of a castle, and other such trifling acrobatics. It is little doubt that there was some atavism in the unconventionality of "La Princesse."

She liked to visit my father at his Suresnes home as much as did the Princesse Mathilde, and always stayed for a cup of tea and was as simple and charming as could be, without in the least losing or lessening her air of being a great lady. She declared herself enchanted

with the place, and I cannot believe she was responsible for the statement printed in her memoirs to the effect that the house was "ridiculous." She was always exceedingly truthful and frank — often too much so!— and would never have said she liked the place if she had not. I have always thought that those intrusted with the publication of her memoirs repeated the Goncourt tale.

One of the Goncourt brothers once came with the Princesse Mathilde to Suresnes for tea. The princess introduced him, of course, but my father neither caught the name nor was sufficiently impressed to speak of the gentleman afterward. Later Goncourt wrote his memoirs, and between a story of cutting his finger and his cook's recipe for custard he sandwiched his opinion of the Suresnes home formed on this uninvited visit when he had, so to speak, sneaked in as attendant to Princesse Mathilde. It was a nasty paragraph and entirely misleading. The home my father had built at Suresnes was original, that cannot be denied, but it was charming and delightful and distinctive, as was everything that came from my father's inspiration and contained nothing to justify M. de Goncourt's tirade.

Princesse Mathilde used to come to see my father at

his house in Suresnes at least once a year. She was much amused at his passion for adding to it and was always asking, "And now what are you building at Suresnes?"

Upon being told, she would always answer, "Well, I shall have to come to see that one of these fine Sundays."

And come she did, as simply and humanly as any "bourgeoise."

Next to the Empress, Princesse Mathilde and Princesse Anna Murat had been the two most important women of the court. Mathilde had married a certain Prince Demidoff of San Denato, one of the richest men in Russia — the sale of his works of art alone was so huge that it took a week to get through with it; but this marriage had failed, and the princess had returned to France to live. Socially she was extremely broadminded, and was called the "Republican Princess." Her friends often used to rebuke her in jest for being "republican" and she would retort to their jibes by saying with a laugh: "Why, I have to be a Bonapartist. Had it not been for the great Napoleon, I should probably be selling oranges on the port of Ajaccio!" Which shows how great was her simplicity. Her salon was the meeting place for painters, writers, artists and others of Bohemian tastes.



PRINCESSE MATHILDE



DUCHESSE DE MORNY

A CENTURY OF FASHION

There were not many "linked atoms" between her and the Empress, chiefly because, before Eugénie married the emperor, Mathilde had been the one to receive at court.

Her chief charms were her simplicity and her good nature. She was not handsome, but she had a pleasant face, very beautiful throat and shoulders. The latter, by the way, she displayed until the end of her days, and quite successfully, as she was remarkably well preserved. She dressed with a certain elegance, very simply in the daytime and magnificently in the evening. Her avocation was painting, and as her presence was not required upon all court occasions, her artistic and democratic tastes kept her much at home in her house in the Rue de Courcelles.

She was very fond of my father, had a great sympathy and understanding of him and his work, often would come to our shop in the Rue de la Paix, just because the spirit moved her, and was, until the day of her death, a most faithful client.

Madame de Morny, known as "La Duchesse", as I have said, was born Princess Troubetskoi, and was a delightful creature. She was rather thin, of the type "translucent", as one of her admirers expressed it, with a delicate face and a fair coloring, like that of most

Russians. My memory yields nothing striking about her with the one exception of her behavior at the death of her husband, the Duc de Morny. Her grief seemed inconsolable. She had her hair cut and put into the coffin with her dead husband. She assumed the most severe mourning, and never went out except in a closed carriage lined with black. But in spite of this great display of grief, she later married the Duc de Sesto and became very popular at the Spanish court. She was really exceedingly fascinating and full of gracious little acts. Once she gave my father two pearl scarfpins, one for Gaston and one for myself, in rememberance of her husband. Unfortunately I lost mine one day while riding, a mishap I regretted greatly because of the association. "La Duchesse" and my mother had very much in common where their taste was concerned, and Madame de Morny often had my mother's dresses copied for her own use.

During MacMahon's administration, not only the salons and receptions, but the races returned to the magnificence of the Empire. These last evolved into nothing more or less than fashion shows during this president's term. It would be almost impossible for the modern imagination to reconstruct such scenes. We made dresses for Lady Sykes to wear at Epsom, the

[100]

A CENTURY OF FASHION

biggest race course in England, that to-day would be too gorgeous even for a ball. For instance, she had one princess gown made of alternating breadths of apple green and white embroidered as exquisitely as any Louis XV dress, and with a train two meters long. This was duplicated in copper-colored satin with four wide black and four tan *crevés*.

In this brilliant decade, as in its predecessor ruled by Eugénie, no demimondaine was admitted to the "tribunes" or grand stands at the races. A gentleman was responsible for his companion; and if he were the member of any club entitling him to entrance at the races and brought any woman with him of whom the other ladies disapproved — and they disapproved violently of all actresses and fast women — the woman was evicted and the man lost his membership in the club. Those fair ones not admitted to the "tribunes" always stationed themselves on the opposite side of the turf in beautiful carriages full of flowers or on mail coaches. Here they drank champagne and made a very lovely and lively picture. Thus were the "cocottes" separated from ladies of quality in that quaint bygone day.

The return from the Grand Prix was like a parade from fairyland.

[101]

All the women of fashion, whether of the great or the half world, rode in open carriages, often with an outrider wearing their colors on the first of their four horses, "à la Deaumont." Madame de Morny's jockeys wore striped jackets of red and white and pearl-gray top hats. The two footmen stationed in the rear were similarly clad. Madame de Metternich's jockeys and footmen wore bright yellow, and her horses' heads were decorated with yellow wistaria branches. Madame Musard's wore emerald green; and Cora Pearl, one of the most celebrated demimondaines of her period, decked her footmen out in the bright yellow affected by Madame de Metternich. Rosalie Leon, another famous lady of the evening, lined her carriage with purple and outfitted her jockeys with purple jackets. These radiant creatures would drive from the race course to the Place de la Concorde and, turning about, return to the lake and circle it two or three times until evening. No modern beauty pageant ever equalled their stately parade. It was the day when fashionable and fast women were veritable queens. Even the most negligible "cocotte" had at least a half "Deaumont", and they drove horses worth twenty-five thousand francs a pair.

Cora Pearl, who occasionally came to our shop in the [102]

Rue de la Paix, and whose jockeys wore imitations of Madame de Metternich's famous yellow liveries, was one of the most famous of the ladies of the evening of that time. Every one had either heard of her or knew her. She had created a great scandal by trying to sing the rôle of Cupid in "Orphée aux Enfers" in French. No one would admit then, as they have done since, that any outlander could play or sing in French, and the audience allowed itself to be highly diverted by Mlle. Pearl's attempt. Her teeth were incomparable, but her make-up was shockingly overdone, and she looked much better at a distance. Her lemon-colored hair was so exactly the shade of the yellow satin of her carriage that it could scarcely be distinguished from it.

Madame Rosalie Leon, whose carriage was always a bright spot in the parade from the Grand Prix, was one of the most elegant of the demimondaines and given to an originality in dress which always had conservative people like my mother up in arms. I remember that my mother once attended the races where Rosalie Leon appeared in a lemon-colored taffeta made entirely of tiny pleated flounces from the top to the bottom. The bodice was finished in a swallowtail effect in the back, such as is occasionally seen in the dresses of Louis XVI.

About this yellow frock was tied a leaf green sash which was knotted at one side and its ends left floating. This combination of brilliant yellow and springlike green, which would never be remarked to-day, created a sensation and scandalized my mother. When my father asked her upon her return if she had seen Madame Rosalie Leon's yellow and green dress, she snapped, "I did. And I never saw anything so ridiculous. It looked just like an *omelette aux fines herbes*."

The truth was that Madame Leon was very charming in her omelet dress and proceeded to set the fashion for wearing yellow trimmed with green or vice versa. For by then people no longer shied at something new or different. My father had at last won the day in the matter of dress and banished banality and sartorial unprogressiveness from Paris forever.

It is extraordinary how custom prevails with people in the matter of modes. The most absurd or grotesque fashion, the most unusual colors, whether beautiful or hideous, need only be seen long enough to be admired or at least accepted. For example, there were the variations I introduced into children's dresses about thirty-five or forty years ago, when my daughter was a little girl. Until she was about twelve years of age, one model served for all of her little frocks, which were of

white cotton for day wear in the summer, and white muslin, embroidered on the hem and with a simple ribbon twisted around the waist and knotted, with the ends left free, for parties. Now, just so long as that bit of ribbon was pink or blue it escaped notice; but when I tied one about her waist of mauve or yellow or lavender, all the mothers threw up their hands and screamed, "How shocking. Lilac on a child! Dreadful!" But to-day children may be seen in orange, vivid green or cherry, or bright yellow, not to mention the enormous plaids in the most violent colors, and the mothers seem quite complacent.

I remember that a lady whom I did not know came up to me in Mont Dore the day following a children's party and said, "I wonder if it would be indiscreet for me to ask you to give me a sample of your little daughter's yellow sash. I think it was so lovely, although I should never have thought myself of putting yellow on a blond child of that age."

Another time I took my daughter to an exhibition shortly after the death of her grandfather, when she was still in semi-mourning for him. I had dressed her in violet, cap and all, — the soft dark tint of real violets almost as dark as marine blue. And I give you my word that had I come to the exhibition leading a crocodile I

A CENTURY OF FASHION

should not have been more stared at than I was with my little daughter in her violet dress.

But to return to the lovely Rosalie Leon. This fair lady of the evening later became the Princess de Wittgenstein, and had magnificent carriages that vied with those of royalty. Her color too was violet, rather an unusual one for that time, and the liveries of her lackeys and footmen as well as the satin lining of her carriages were all of that royal hue. I remember she created quite a ripple of excitement at a reception and dinner given in honor of the Prince of Orange, who was passing through Paris, at "La Maison Dorée", one of the smart restaurants of the time. Something like twelve of the smartest women of Paris were present, wearing gowns of white and orange. Madame Leon's frock, of my father's contriving in the style of Louis XVI, was of white tulle trimmed with orange blossoms and small oranges tied with orange ribbons. It was partly responsible for making her queen of the evening, not only because it was charming as a costume, but because it was amusing, for we French people can never see that combination of orange blossom and fruit without smiling.

Another of the pretty ladies known for her beauty around 1878 was Mlle. Katinka-Fehry. It was she who



MARIE LOUISE DE MARCY
She was twenty and wanted a dress to suit an "old woman of twenty-eight"



COMTESSE DE VILLENEUVE IN VERONESE COSTUME

made the famous remark, "Society women go to such and such a couturier to be dressed as cocottes: I go to Worth to be dressed as a lady." It should be remarked there was no difficulty in dressing her "as a lady" because she had all the refinement, delicate nuances of manner and graciousness usually ascribed — and often erroneously — to such gentry.

The few of her world that came to us usually did so, incidentally, because they wished to be dressed to resemble Madame de Metternich, Madame de Jaucourt, Madame de Pourtalès and other of the famous women of fashion of that period. They were pleasant customers, for they never worried about money or prices and were only concerned with elegance and being attired to please.

The great majority of them eventually married—as did Rosalie Leon—ruling German princes of more or less importance in the Teutonic royal house. There were, of course, thousands who were pretty and elegant and to some extent famous in Paris during the Empire.

Few, however, came to the shop in the Rue de la Paix; and when they did, it was not because we sought them out. Of these, Adéle Courtois, Constance Rezuche, Juliette Beau, Anna Deslion of the incom-

parable beauty, and Madame Barucci — also called "La Barucci" — were among the better known.

"La Barucci" was a handsome, pale woman with a look of one marked for death. And she did die rather young of tuberculosis. She was always covered with pearls. I remember she used to wear fifteen strings at a time! And although pearls were not so expensive then as now, it was a noteworthy display. I doubt if there is any one woman to-day possessing them in such profusion.

Of all the women who were decorative at the races and in the Bois under the MacMahon administration, perhaps La Paiva was the most celebrated. Her life read like a Rider Haggard romance, and the wildest stories were circulated about her. I shall repeat here only those of which I am certain.

She first came to Paris under the protection of a Mr. Herz, who introduced her as his wife. Later she married Monsieur de Paiva and finally Count Henckel of Donnermarck, who was made governor of Alsace-Lorraine after the War of 1870. Her beauty, for which she was noted, was of rather a strange type, and she enhanced it by powdering her hair blond. She was the first to do so, by the way. Dyes did not exist at the time, and powdering was the only process available.

The first time she appeared in the Bois with fair hair she started a storm of talk.

Her house, which she had built on a site formerly occupied by a restaurant, also came in for its share of scandalized comment. At that time it was considered the ultimate in splendor, although in this day of modern palaces I doubt if its glories would attract any great amount of attention. The staircase was of onyx, exceedingly rare at that time in Paris, and the bench alongside of her bed was not of wood, but of a mass of solid silver. Her bathtub was lined with gold, and the faucets were of the same pure metal with enormous turquoises set in the tops. She herself told my father that on the very spot where she built this house of Oriental opulence she had once stood shaking with cold and starving.

No jewel casket could approach hers in the magnificence of its contents. She was the first to wear what are now commonly called "bouchons de carafe" — glass stoppers for wine flasks — or enormous stones as big as nuts, bigger than any franc piece. When she became engaged to Count Henckel after the war he gave her as his wedding gift Empress Eugénie's own necklace, which that exiled sovereign had been obliged to sell. This example of the lapidary's art was considered the

finest of its time, for while there were only three rows of diamonds, the stones were flawless.

La Paiva later bought the Chateau de Ponchartrain, and never was a fine property more wonderfully kept. Even in autumn a dead leaf was never found on the ground.

I did not see her until she was no longer young and her beauty was already on the wane. And I am afraid that I did not appreciate it. Her eyelids were shockingly blackened, and this, combined with the prominence of her eyes, made her look fierce and hawklike. But whatever her shortcomings in the matter of makeup, her taste in beautiful things, which she loved and understood — the furniture of the Regency, which she had copied, was the beginning of a needed revolution in the house furnishings of the time — was above reproach.

I must admit that I attended the races, where all these beauties and celebrities paraded their wares, very seldom. The first time was when I was about seven or eight years old and I paid the franc admission which permitted me to look on among the standees. My next appearance was when I was eighteen or so. The reason that impelled me to make it was a very strong one. I wanted to wear a gray top hat! And as one

might not appear in a gray top hat in Paris I went to Chantilly, accompanied by a friend of my father, wearing my cherished topper and carrying a dust coat. A fortnight later I attended the Grand Prix, but this time in a black hat, as the gray was too informal for the great races during the years MacMahon was chief executive of France.

The climax of this administration came with the Exhibition of 1878. Not even Russia, noted for her fabulous festas, could have surpassed it in magnificence.



FANCY DRESS COSTUMES



My FIRST decade of authority in the House of Worth saw the splendor of the MacMahon administration culminate in the Exhibition of 1878. No royal reception in stately England or magnificent Russia ever surpassed in pomp or circumstance the Grand Opening of this, the biggest show of France. The same perfection that distinguished great occasions under the Empire again lent finish to each detail, even to the arrival of the President himself. The carriages of Monsieur MacMahon's party, followed by the Municipal Horse Guards, drew up before the Trocadéro with an exquisite flourish and Monsieur le President descended from his Deaumont to meet a fanfare that would have gratified Eugénie herself. The same sort of bright, extravagant gowns of lemon and blue and pink nothing less than ball dresses defying the amused sun —



LADY PAGET AS CLEOPATRA 1897



AN AMERICAN CUSTOMER WITH WONDERFUL PEARLS

that had glorified social gatherings before the empress was banished, prevailed that first day. I remember seeing the wealthy Mrs. Mackay in a fabulously bouffant bronze satin trimmed with bronze pearls holding up a train over two yards long, and picking her way daintily through the mud!

Lavish entertainment was the order of the day. The Elysée, the Town Hall and even Versailles vibrated to the footsteps of the invited multitude. The exhibitors gave an important reception at the latter place, which I attended as a representative of one of the great firms. The Prince and Princess of Wales and the whole of the Parisian aristocracy were there, as well as the foremost manufacturers. The great Hall of Mirrors, where the Versailles Treaty was signed after the World War, was so crowded with elegance and fashion that it seemed but a fragment of its vast size.

It was to this reception that Madame Benardaki, one of the most distinctive beauties of the time, wore the Worth model that later was made famous in London by Patti as Violetta in "La Traviata" or "La Dame aux Camelias." Its foundation was green velvet. Over this verdant richness was a swaying bouffant overdress of pink tulle, trimmed with great fringes of roses, and split front and back to reveal fugitive panels of green.

And recall, while considering this inspiration, that the occasion upon which Madame Benardaki appeared in its stately loveliness was a formal afternoon reception and not a ball.

This splendid creature had appeared on the social horizon of Paris during MacMahon's presidency. She was a Russian whose husband had held some official position at the Russian court. One of her sisters-in-law was, I believe, the Madame de Pachenstein who later became the wife of Ambassador Nizard, and the other was, as I recall, Madame de Noailles. The latter was tall and stately, a Juno or a Cybele in type, and possessed a profile to which no camera of that benighted photographic era could ever do justice. In addition to her great beauty she was truly sweet and simple and kind, and her expression was as softly winning as her face was lovely.

Each year the English colony gave a ball for the benefit of the British hospital, and during the Exhibition the Prince of Wales, in Paris for this much heralded event, attended this dance in person. With him was the princess so beloved of London, the future Queen Alexandra of England. And although I may lose all reputation for gallantry by so saying, candor compels me to state that, in spite of her grace and amiability,

I found this future ruler of the country upon which the sun never sets to be something of a dowd. She had the faculty of making any frock, no matter how smart or fresh or new, seem just another old rag. At this British ball her gown was laboriously elaborate, with a great flounce of lace on the skirt and a court train. It was of a grayish white material and its little shoulder cape of ermine, a fur very much out of fashion at the time, made her seem an elderly dowager instead of the youthful princess she really was. About her neck was hung a quantity of diamonds, and in her hair, which she always dressed in the same prim fashion, was a very heavy diadem. Whether it was because of the dirty white of her gown, the outmoded ermine cape or the clutter of diamonds weighing her down, she looked for all the world like a maid decked out in her mistress' cast-off finery on her afternoon off! I told you I intended forfeiting all reputation for gallantry.

We made only one dress for this Queen of England at our Paris house. Lady de Grey ordered it for her, but she came for the fittings herself instead of trusting to models, and the first took place, in spite of the three ladies in waiting who accompanied her. Alexandra had scarcely stepped on the tiny stage to be fitted before these gadflies began: "Don't tire her Highness." "Be

careful of that pin!" "Don't stick her Highness." "Watch out now!" "Don't touch her Highness." The poor fitter dripped with perspiration and trembled with nervousness, and in the end hardly knew whether she dared use a pin, let alone where to put it. Alexandra herself was pleasantly pliant and agreeable to all suggestions, and, being rather deaf, missed all the uproar of solicitude going on about her.

This gown, with one other, were the only ones we sold her directly. She was loyal to England, and would buy only from British modistes. However, as these stocked our models for retail purposes, Alexandra wore many a Worth model unawares.

Queen Victoria undoubtedly set her the example in this. For Victoria never ordered anything from us, either directly or indirectly. Her policy, a wise one for any ruling monarch, was never to buy anything made outside of England. But even had this not been the case, even had she been less shrewd in statesmanship than she was, her German tastes and her English inclinations would have combined automatically to bar anything Gallic. Nevertheless, in spite of her rabid allegiance to goods of British manufacture, we made many a dress to her measurements, sold it to her through

English dressmakers and had the joy of watching her complacently wear it, believing it untainted by alien handiwork.

She affected an austere fashion, particularly after the death of Prince Albert. But only the style of her frocks was restricted, for the court dressmakers used to tell us that she was wildly extravagant and never wore the same dress twice. Fortunately for her reputation as a prudent queen, her gowns were made all so exactly alike, with their bit of lace from her remarkable collection of rare pieces that dated from the time of Louis XV and Henry VIII, that the uninitiated would have been quite willing to believe that she wore the same four or five frocks of velvet, satin, brocade or tulle year in and year out.

With the death of Prince Albert she donned black and a widow's bonnet. The latter she did not remove even when wearing the imperial and royal crown, which was, in shape, a small, closed coronet. Her superimposing this crown upon the widow's cap was quite characteristic of her independence. However, at that time it was quite the fashion to be individual, and her gesture passed with little comment.

The same ball that vouchsafed me my first glimpse

[117]

of Alexandra, then Princess of Wales, also permitted me contact with the owners of most of the great names of England and France. The famous Lady de Grey, at that time Lady Lowther and only seventeen or eighteen years of age, made her initial appearance at this famous dance. The Baronne Alphonse de Rothschild had brought her to us a few days before the festa to get a dress. She had expressed the desire for a frock that would flaunt her brother's racing colors — the Duke of Pembroke had several horses entered for the Grand Prix that was to take place a few days after the ball — and we had met her wish by making her a very simple dress of white tulle covered with red bows tying yellow roses — her brother's colors — and yellow bows tying red roses.

Even then, this girl who was to figure in a hundred memoirs, was exceedingly tall, well over six feet, and her height, combined with her very authentic beauty and unusual grace, made a great stir in Paris society. I well remember how that famous company at the English colony's ball hushed and then buzzed excitedly when this lovely, slender, stately girl came in with her brother, himself several inches taller than his sister!

She was, first as Lady de Grey and then as the Marquise de Ripon, one of the most important patrons

[118]

of our establishment in the Rue de la Paix—not because her orders were larger than others, but because she was the dominant social figure in London in the latter part of the nineteenth century. One might almost say that she was the unofficial queen of London during the last two decades of the 1800's, a veritable social oracle.

Remarkably enough, no one ever thought of her unusual height. For she had the gift, not of appearing tall, but of making others seem small. Nothing could have exceeded her grace or stateliness. I once saw her in a trailing gown of blue velvet, embroidered in silver, with an underdress of white satin, come down the stairs — a test for any woman — and no description was worthy of her but that gallant old phrase, — a vision.

Most of the English ladies of quality who came to us were almost as tall. Incidentally, the British considered height a great feminine asset. I remember speaking with an Englishman concerning Lady de Grey and saying, "Of course, she is very beautiful, but really she is a bit too tall."

Whereupon he drew himself up, glared at me and said fiercely, "But it is just such women who make the mothers of our tall, fine men."

Another Junoesque beauty to make her first appearance at the British ball was the lovely Madame Porges.

It was shortly after her marriage and she wore her wedding dress of silver tulle trimmed with knots of roses. Her only jewel was a diamond ornament caught in her hair, but her perfection needed no jewels. I have never seen a woman with a lovelier figure or shoulders and neck. My father once made a peacock costume for her, of white velvet over lemon tulle, cunningly patterned with pearls and silver peacock feathers. It boasted a long train, made of five rows of feathers and the same snowy plumage edged the décolleté. And such was the whiteness of Madame Porges' skin without the aid of powder or maquaillage, that one could not tell, even under a strong light, where the flesh begun and the bodice left off.

Her husband had been one of the protagonists of the great De Beers mines, but had sold out to his associates. He was the Crossus who built the replica of the famous Legion of Honor Palace at Rochefort en Yveline, that was turned into a hospital during the Great War and is remembered gratefully by so many of the wounded who came under the expert care of the greatest physicians of the twentieth century there.

This peacock costume that had borne such valiant testimony to the purity of Madame Porges' coloring was only one of hundreds my father made for great



THE PEACOCK DRESS, MADE FOR PRINCESSE DE SAGAN IN 1864



A CENTURY OF FASHION

beauties. For he was famous for his ability to design unusual masquerades, and whenever a great costume ball was announced, women thronged to him demanding something entirely different from the customary gauds and tinsel of such disguises, and often on twelve hours' notice! But he never failed them.

One of the most famous who turned to him for such costumes, as well as for her usual wardrobe, was the Duchess of Medina-Celi, called by her intimates "The Terrible Duchess." This grande dame was a power in Madrid in the time of the Victorians and relentlessly maintained her supremacy. This was not always easy to do, for society in Madrid was limited to a small and most exclusive circle, the members of which attended all fêtes and were familiar with each other's wit and social resource to the point of boredom. The costume balls especially were the despair of those who wished to avoid banality, for the masquerades obtainable at the local shops were dreary affairs without originality or distinction. The Terrible Duchess refused even to consider these commonplace disguises — although they were accepted by the rest of social Madrid — and upon two occasions sent my father imperious wires demanding something amazing enough to stun her contemporaries - this, on eight days' notice!

In answer to the first wire my father rushed her a mermaid costume which doubtless would inspire mirth to-day, but which was looked upon at that time as a heaven-sent glory. It was made of alternating water green and blue tulle with two fish tails of silver cloth embroidered with silver scales turned back over the full skirt and train. Fearing that her hairdresser had had little experience with mermaids' coiffures, my father also sent a beautiful wig of soft, long hair, a shell ornament for her forehead and a silken net encrusted with pearls and shells with which to drape the wig.

The costume arrived on the very day of the ball, and at midnight, sharp, the Terrible Duchess wore it into the ballroom triumphantly. It was greeted with a delighted shout, and festivities were halted until she could be placed on a table and carried about the room and cheered.

Upon receipt of her second wire my father meditated and then submitted the result to the Madame Medina-Celi by telegraph. She declared herself immensely pleased with his suggestion, and he immediately went ahead with one of the most dazzling—literally—costumes he ever undertook. In design it would have been appropriate for a Louis XIV goddess, if such a creature had ever existed. It was as softly black as

midnight, and its tiny bodice was held by straps that were solid with jewels. As a background for its soot-black beauty, my father made a pearl-gray velvet canopy, ending in a court train and lined it with pink satin solidly embroidered with silver and pearls. This canopy was borne by four tiny black boys dressed in blinding white. There was an effect! And again the Terrible Duchess made an entrance that was triumphal.

Another grande dame, who never would have considered a fancy costume that did not originate with my father, was the Princesse de Sagan, social leader under both the Empire and during the MacMahon administration. The costume balls which she gave in the Hôtel de Sagan — Valençay-Sagan — a fitting setting for such magnificent affairs, were always the climax of each season. I remember that for the one she gave after my introduction into the firm, my father copied an eighteenth-century Turkish costume from one of Vanloo's paintings. And she received her guests at the top of the great flight of steps in the entrance of the Hôtel de Sagan, clad in its clinging Oriental trousers and seductive veils.

Shortly after this she gave the famous Bal des Bêtes and then the much discussed Peasant's Ball. The Ball of the Beasts had considerable success, but was much

criticized; and several of the important feminine conservatives sent regrets. For the Peasants' Ball, which was most amusing, the splendor of the Hôtel de Sagan — consider giving a peasant's ball in such a palace! — was hidden under masses of flowers and shrubs.

For the Beasts' Ball my father made this famous hostess a peacock costume, which included a train or tail made of the feathers of this decorative bird and a diamond headdress with a peacock's tuft rising from it.

We made innumerable costumes for this ball, by the way, many of which I have forgotten. There was the Ibis costume designed for the Marquise Herve de St. Denis, who had attended the previous De Sagan ball as Minerva. This was a glorified dress of silk gauze, embroidered in all shades of pink, to match the plumage of the heron. And instead of the traditional headdress seen in the pictures of the Egyptian goddesses of this deity, my father made a little diamond diadem with ibis wings to fall over the ears, and with strings of turquoises and diamonds pendant that were long enough to cover the bodice.

Another lovely and original costume my father designed for the Ball of the Beasts was the one worn by Madame Lambert, née Gustave de Rothschild. It was of blue and silver with a cherry belt. The necessary



MRS. HENRY WHITE IN A VERONESE COSTUME MADE FOR THE DEVONSHIRE BALL

IN 1899



LADY LISTER-KAYE IN A VERONESE COSTUME MADE FOR THE DEVONSHIRE BALL

A CENTURY OF FASHION CO

jungle effect was gained by a train made of a tiger's skin and a hood fashioned of a head of one of these beasts, so arranged that its fangs fastened in her hair. (Hercules is often pictured in this same headdress.) Huge jewels held this hood in place, and her neck was bound with strands of pearls.

All four of the Baronnes de Rothschild came to us, but of them all my mother preferred, not the beauty of the wearer of the tiger's skin, but that of the Baronne Alphonse. She was indeed lovely, with a distinct touch of the Oriental about her, and she wore her things with an air. I remember seeing her at the opera in a pearl-gray dress, with a cluster of golden grapes on her bouffant skirt, a string of diamonds in her hair with one great stone like a flame above her forehead; and I had to admit that she merited my mother's admiration. However, I found my mother lovelier.

Naturally among the many costumes designed by my father for the Bal des Bêtes, there had to be one of Medusa. It was a sort of Louis XV Medusa at that, with serpents, worked in pailletes, writhing about the hips and a hood made of a serpent's head. This was worn by the second Madame Henri Schneider, a striking personality that brightened the 70's. She was a great beauty, dark, with black eyes, a cameo-clear profile,

magnificent teeth, a beautiful waist and wonderful shoulders. Two years after the death of her sister, the first Madame Schneider, she married her brother-in-law, chiefly, so it was said, in order not to be separated from his son and her nephew, of whom she had assumed the care after the death of his mother and to whom she was devoted. Her sister also had been very beautiful, but in quite a different way. Her coloring had been very like that of the empress. She had had the same golden, almost reddish, hair, the same lilylike complexion, the same perfect beauty. My mother always compared her to a Madonna, and her smile did indeed possess a certain divinity.

My father fashioned several costumes for the second Madame Schneider. There was the famous Goddess of the Night costume, which was made of dark blue velvet, sewn with diamonds and worn with a diadem of sapphires and diamonds especially designed for it. Then for the Peasants' Ball there was a humble dress of a yellow cloth, worn with an immense bonnet such as are seen in the Caux region, but somewhat idealized by a touch of the Louis XV period. She was charming in it and, as always, was greeted with a little murmur of admiration when she appeared.

How it amused these great ladies to pretend a humble [126]

station! There was the Marquise Herve de St. Denis who appeared at the same ball dressed in rags as a beggar maid, with her lovely hair flying loose, a kerchief bound about her head, an old straw hat on the top of it, and a great tray of flowers in her arms which she went about pretending to sell. What divine discontent is it in those born to plenty that makes them delight in such a masquerade?

This same Peasants' Ball incidentally was the means of bringing to light a delicious instance of my father's despotism. Years before, indeed about the time that the Prince Imperial had begun to attend the famous Mondays of the empress, a Miss Payne, a pretty young American, was included in the list of guests as a sort of antidote for the formality of these important receptions. She soon became one of my father's favorites, and he delighted in designing lovely things for her, not only because she was amiable and pretty, but because she was "portant bien la toilette." In the course of time she became engaged to one Mr. Bischoffsheim and was given carte blanche by her fiancé in the matter of a trousseau. Accordingly, accompanied by her future sister-in-law, she came to my father and ordered, with exceeding good taste and propriety, just enough and not too much. However, in spite of her discretion, Mr.

Bischoffsheim astonished my father by asking for a discount when the bill was presented. Such a thing had never been heard of before in our shop. The majority of our clientele either paid cash or met the bill presented to them within the year without question. My father said something of the sort to Miss Payne's fiancé; but Mr. Bischoffsheim insisted upon his discount, and at last, to have peace and at the same time to please the bride's future sister-in-law, Madame Goldsmith, who was one of his "glories" and for whom he had the deepest liking and respect, my father gave way to the penurious bridegroom. But he warned Mr. Bischoffsheim that he had made his last dress for the bride. And he kept his word. No amount of diplomacy on the part of Madame Goldsmith or the future Madame Bischoffsheim could bring him down from his high horse, once he was securely mounted. And only once, upon the occasion of the Peasants' Ball, did they manage to circumvent him.

When Madame Bischoffsheim received her invitation, she decided that only my father could find something appropriate for her to wear, and in desperation she came to me and ordered a costume. Knowing nothing of the little contretemps involving her husband and the disputed bill, I took the order. That evening,

when my father learned of what I had done, he was naturally annoyed but, because of the circumstances, permitted the order to remain on the books. However, the very next day he sat himself down and wrote his former favored client that her order for a costume for the Peasants' Ball had been accepted without his knowledge and that while, so long as it had been taken, it would be filled, he wished her to understand that in the future as in the past no other orders would be considered from her. Oh, he was a stubborn one, was this Worth père, when he set his mind to it!

The result of this note was a strange bit of strategy on the part of Madame Bischoffsheim's modiste. Hearing her valuable client admiring the dresses we had made for her friends, particularly those for her sister-in-law, Madame Goldsmith, and regretting that she might not also be dressed by Worth, this practical individual bribed one of our first seamstresses to copy our dresses for Madame Bischoffsheim out of hours. After this had been going on a bit people began saying to us, "Oh, but I saw that dress the other day on Madame Bischoffsheim." "Why, that's exactly like Madame Bischoffsheim's new frock." To save ourselves, we could n't understand how a guarded model, fresh from my father's inspiration, could have got into the hands of the

copyists so soon. Presently we came to the conclusion that there was a leak somewhere, and investigated and caught our first seamstress red-handed.

Another time that my father succeeded in squaring his account with a client who objected to his bill was in the case of Lord Dudley. Lord Dudley was one of those men particular about his wife's attire to the point of dictating its last detail. He had written my father, ordering a dress for Lady Dudley and describing it minutely, even to the hand-painted orchids with which he wished it trimmed. Owing to his desire that this exotic flower, hand-painted at that, be used among several other rather expensive items, the cost of the frock mounted and when Lord Dudley received our bill he refused to pay it. This time my father did not retreat as he had in the case of Mr. Bischoffsheim, but took the matter into court, and won his case, — in London, mind you, and before an English judge. And Lord Dudley paid his bill!

In London, the Duchess of Manchester, later the Duchess of Devonshire, played very much the same rôle as that taken so successfully by the Princesse de Sagan in Paris — namely, that of the spectacular hostess. And neither of them was ever so happy as when planning some incredibly magnificent reception or costume ball.



LADY RANDOLPH CHURCHILL AS A BYZANTINE EMPRESS AT THE DEVONSHIRE BALL



COUNTESS COLEBROOKE AT THE DEVONSHIRE BALL

The Duchess of Devonshire had three daughters by her first marriage, Lady Gosford, Lady Derby and one other whose name I cannot at the moment recall. And these were her invaluable aides. When the stupendous entertainments which she gave in Devonshire House were her famous costume balls, my father was again mobbed by those ambitious to outshine their sisters in masquerade, even as he was preceding each great De Sagan dance. And again he pleased them all. His was an amazing fecundity of ideas. When one stops to think of the thousands of dresses he planned, the hundreds of women for whom he designed gowns, the innumerable revolutions in dress which he brought to pass, the limitless demands upon his originality, one marvels that he never repeated himself. But he never did. To him each frock was a new creation, each woman another inspiration and each masquerade another opportunity.

But perhaps the most spectacular, or at least the most costly of all fancy dress costumes, born of my father's inventiveness was not made for a woman at all, but a man—the Duke of Marlborough, who married the lovely daughter of W. K. Vanderbilt.

Although the shop in the Rue de la Paix had seen a number of freak orders taken, this request from the Duke that we make him a costume for the Devonshire

ball, a request that he would not hear of our denying, was something new under the sun that shone on the Worth establishment. However, we acceded to his demand after a few scandalized protestations, and got to work on a Louis XV costume of straw-colored velvet embroidered in silver, pearls and diamonds. The waistcoat was made of a magnificent white and gold damask that was an exact copy of a very rare old pattern. Each pearl and diamond was sewed on by hand, and it took several girls almost a month to complete this embroidery of jewels. Had the Duke not insisted that his costume be perfection, we should never have dared put such costly work on it. In spite of his orders about elegance, when I came to make out his bill, I was almost afraid to begin it. But at last when I got it totaled, it came to five thousand francs — it would have been fifty thousand to-day — or one thousand dollars for a masquerade to be worn for one evening. However, when damask is especially manufactured and jeweled embroidery hand-stitched, there is no escaping a bill that is quite as splendid in its way as the costume for which it is rendered.



DRESSES FOR FOREIGN COURTS



CLOSE kin, at least in their splendor and strangeness, to the costumes my father made for the aristocrats of London and Paris to wear to their fabulous masquerades were the court robes he fashioned for the great ladies of Russia. For among the nine queens to wear Worth models were three czarinas. The first, wife of Alexander I, grandmother of the czar murdered by the Bolshevists and sister, I believe, of the Queen of Württemberg, we never saw. We made all of her dresses on a model especially built to her measurements and sent them to her without their ever having been fitted. Her Danish successor, Maria Feodorovna, the sister of Alexandra of England, by the way, began coming to us when she was still the wife of the czarevitch and remained one of our most faithful clients till her death.

Her thoughtfulness and scrupulousness were limit-

[133]

less. For instance, just before her son, the Czarevitch Nicholas, was to be married, she wrote asking for designs and samples in order that she might order some dozen or more dresses which she planned to present to her future daughter-in-law. She said that she particularly had in mind a pink dress, to be embroidered in silver and trimmed with La France roses, for the young bride to wear at a reception to be given at the French Embassy for the royal couple. We made the requested shipment at once, but before her highness could make any selection or send us her order, the Czar Alexander III died suddenly, and the Court went into mourning for a year. Naturally we forgot all about the matter until one day we were stunned to receive the delayed order in full. With the expiration of the official period of mourning, Maria Feodorovna had remembered her letter to us, had made her selection from the material and designs submitted to her over a year before and had written us at once. It so happened that some of the material she chose was no longer manufactured, but we were so touched by the fineness and courtesy of her act that we had it especially made rather than let her highness know or ask her to change her order.

It was through Maria Feodorovna, of course, that we secured the patronage of the ill-starred last empress.

This last czarina whom we served was the only one of the three who came to Paris officially, and the only one I ever had occasion to see. Except that her waist was a little short, depriving her silhouette of a certain elegance, this empress of the tragic destiny was stately, tall and rather handsome. In fact, both she and her sister, the Grand Duchess Serge, had quite a reputation for beauty. I saw her twice when she was decidedly at her best. The first time was when she was coming out of the opera after a gala performance, and the second was at the dedication of the Alexander Bridge in Paris, when twelve little girls, all in white — among whom was my own daughter — presented her with a a great spray of orchids two and a half meters long.

But of the three, we found the second, Maria Feodorovna, the kindest and the most charming. When this princess became czarina, she had my father make a magnificent manteau de cour for her of pink velvet entirely embroidered with silver. This splendid mantle became one of the mainstays of her official wardrobe, and she wore it upon more than one great occasion. When her son Nicholas became czar, she had the pattern of its silver embroidery restitched at a convent on a purple velvet more in keeping with her age and title of Queen Mother.

A CENTURY OF FASHION

The model for this and all other manteaux de cour worn at the Russian court was the one approved by the Master of Robes. The only deviation allowed was the length of the train, and even this was limited by the position at court of the wearer. For instance, if the train worn by the czarina was four meters long, those of the grand duchesses had to be three meters and seventy-five centimeters, those of the princesses three meters and fifty centimeters, and so on.

Aside from this manteau de cour the costume prescribed by court order, was, as I have said, quaint and unusual enough to have been worn at the famous De Sagan or Devonshire balls. It had a white underdress called a "saraphan", which had to be — or at least had to seem to be — buttoned from throat to hem. For state occasions these buttons were often supplanted by diamond brooches or even precious stones especially sewn on. The headdress that went with this costume was a sort of velvet diadem called a kakochnik. From this was suspended a long net made of strands of chenille, like a Spanish filet made of velvet, that bound the hair. Until about 1850 the hair was allowed to hang loose in this velvet mesh, but as it became the custom to wear it done higher on the head, the net



CONSUELO, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

QUEEN ALEXANDRA AND PAGES

was shortened automatically. The *kakochnik*, to which it was fastened, was always encrusted with precious stones and many added a fringe of diamonds, making the headdress appear to be made entirely of jewels. In addition to this brilliant cap with its net to bind the hair, every woman appearing at court had to wear a veil of voile or lace that fell well below her knees.

And not only must the czarina and all her ladies in waiting wear this costume with its regulated train, its flashing headdress and quaint veils upon all official occasions, but they must also abstain from appearing in black. White was the recognized color for old age at the Russian court.

Another time that colors played an important part in this most magnificent of all courts was when any regiment of which the czarina or the grand duchesses were colonels passed in review before their majesties. Then all the ladies had to wear the colors of that particular regiment, a white dress trimmed with red and gold, or blue and gold, as the case might be.

Russia had her great masquerade balls too. The greatest of these took place on what she called her "Mad Day", when every one danced a day and a night or from two o'clock in the afternoon until two o'clock the

following morning. Louis XVI costumes predominated at these, although there were many without any claim to such legitimate origin, but which were dedicated only to the bizarre and fantastic.

They had another custom, at once most interesting and amusing, of which I was told by one of our Russian clients. It seems that on New Year's Day all the ladies of the court used to go to the palace in their most elaborate and ornate robes - donned at eight o'clock in the morning, mind you! — to pay their respects to their majesties. Upon their arrival they were formed into a procession in which each member carried the train of her predecessor, very much as a circus elephant hooks his trunk onto the tail of the beast in front of him. There was a sight for the gods! Those exquisite and often extremely beautiful women in their bejeweled robes, their dazzling kakochniks, their priceless laces and their graceful veils, linked together by five-yard trains like performing circus animals. This formation was kept until they were within a few steps of the czar and czarina, when it was broken in order that each dame might make her obeisance. And, although it might seem only ridiculous, it took both strength and skill to manage those cumbersome court trains. I remember one Russian beauty for whom I had just com-

pleted a manteau de cour of frightful weight, destined for one of these New Year defiles, lifting it tentatively and exclaiming "Poor Madame—", the woman who always followed her in this procession; "How will she ever be able to carry it!"

And speaking of court trains, the most elaborate or at least the heaviest that ever came out of our shop was the one my father made for the wife of the Russian ambassador to Berlin, whom we shall call Monsieur B. Like Lord Dudley of the disputed bill, he was a great lover of exquisite attire and took a great interest and delight in seeing that his wife was gorgeously gowned. Nothing could be too richly jeweled or too heavily embroidered for his voluptuous taste. His wife, herself a member of one of the greatest Russian families and enormously wealthy in her own right, was quite in agreement with him in such matters. And one day, between them, they thought up a manteau de cour such as had never been equaled in grandeur in all the history of marvelous clothes. It was made, as were all those worn at the Court of Russia, after the fashion that prevailed during the reign of Henry VIII, only glorified. And it was truly a gorgeous affair. But heavy mon Dieu!

In due time this remarkable garment was completed

and delivered, and an occasion arose upon which Madame B. might wear it. Naturally it was carried when she went to and from her carriage, but when at last she had been safely conducted to the anteroom of the palace and her astounding train spread out behind her in all its glory, she found to her horror that she could not take a step either forward or backward. Had she been chained to the ground she would not have been more helpless. Again and again she threw her strength against that train, and again and again it refused to budge. Her lips tightened, and she tried it again. No one dared to laugh. One or two, with better control than the rest, offered timid suggestions. She made a last mighty effort — and fainted! There was nothing left to do but take the lady home, her unconscious body in one carriage and the marvelous train in another!

There was no doubt that the Russian clientele was an exceptional one. For while Russian women dressed very simply in the daytime, so inconspicuously, in fact, that even a grand duchess could not have been distinguished from one of her ladies in waiting in her woolen dresses and small hats for walking and sleighing, in the evening and upon all formal or state occasions they blossomed forth in attire that could only be matched

in the Arabian Nights. Since the great Catherine, jewels had had an unbelievable vogue, and the more important court ceremonies were regarded as nothing so much as a time and place in which they might be displayed to the utmost.

Along with the three czarinas we dressed the Grand Duchess Marie, not the one who was the wife of the Grand Duke Vladimir, but the one who was the sister of the Emperor Alexander. It was her habit to come to our shop in the Rue de la Paix attended by some half dozen ladies in waiting. These would all seat themselves in a circle about my father, while he was explaining the dress he had in mind, describing its color and trimming and the details of the design, and when he had concluded, the Grand Duchess Marie would say: "I think I shall have it made in white." Then one after another, her companions would rise as though at a signal and murmur, "If your Highness has no objection, I believe I should like mine made in blue", or "in pink", or "in yellow", until each had chosen her color. In this way my father would sell a hundred dresses in an hour and a half. The color was the only thing ever specified. So far as model or material was concerned he was given carte blanche. And when, a fortnight later, the grand duchess and her ladies returned for

their fittings they always declared themselves more than delighted with the way he had succeeded in bringing out the best points of each of them.

This was the way my father loved to work best, quite unhampered by suggestions, quite free to develop his own ideas. It was, to be truthful, the only way he ever worked. For no woman was ever known to come into the shop full of directions and prepared to order, say, a pink frock — when my father thought she should not order a pink, but a blue one — and leave with the pink. Somehow she would always find herself with the blue, and, incidentally, her directions still in her possession!

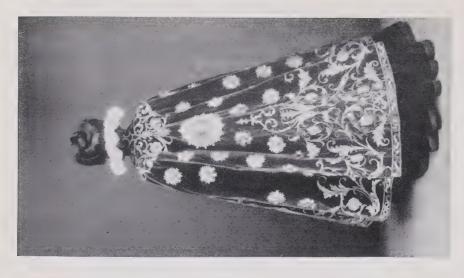
Neither lack of time nor patience ever deterred my father, when it was a question of what he considered the right materials, colors or design. And although he was always courtesy and diplomacy itself, he never stopped until his customer had been convinced of the virtue in his choice rather than her own, — or at least had looked convinced. And it never failed that the very ones who had clung with the greatest stubbornness to their own conceits had been the ones most pleased in the end, especially after some one had exclaimed over the becomingness of the formerly despised color or material or style. Therefore, after all, the de-

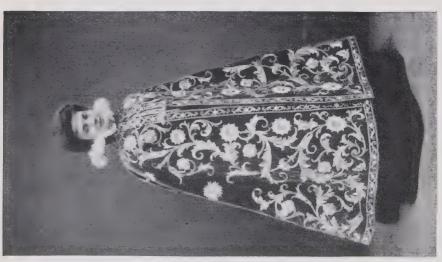


FAMOUS UMBRELLA MADE BY WORTH FOR A POTENTATE OF FAR EAST



ANOTHER VIEW OF SAME





TWO VIEWS OF A CLOAK MADE FOR A POTENTATE OF FAR EAST

termination of Worth, père, to have his own way never hurt any one. Quite to the contrary, it was, instead, the facet of his genius that in the end brought all his clientele to trust him blindly and never to question his decisions or suggestions. In fact, it became quite the thing, especially with his American customers, never to look at a model. Instead, they would sit quietly and listen while, a fold of material draped over his arm, he would outline briefly something of the design he had in mind. Then they would say, perhaps, "It sounds most attractive. Go ahead." And that would be all.

But all this helped make a great autocrat of him. He lived quite retired from the world, except as it sought him out in his shop. And here he was a potentate, adored by his family and his employees, and his slightest word heeded by all women, from queens to commoners. He even had his way with the Empress Eugénie herself upon occasion. Therefore it was only natural that in time he came to have no awe of anything, neither of the royalty of birth nor of wealth, and to recognize only two higher in authority than himself, — God and the emperor. Not that he ever so expressed himself, but that I gathered so much from having been so close to him for almost forty years. Then, in addition to this certain appreciation of himself, he was rather jealous

of his position and authority, and often I had to step very lightly, particularly in his own special province of design and the development of new materials, in order not to hurt his feelings or seem to usurp. And this, despite the fact that he had trained me zealously to be skilled about such things, and that it was the dearest wish of his heart that I should succeed him.

IX

THE GENESIS OF A MODE



Social genius in statesmen has exerted no negligible influence on the history of dressmaking. Under the MacMahon administration, the seventies were glamorous and the couturier flourished. In that blithe decade the great Opera House of Paris, that has furnished so many guidebooks with eloquent chapters, was inaugurated. Assisting at this important ceremony was an audience that seemed composed of all the notables of the world. The Lord Mayor of London and his suite were there. Queen Isabella of Spain and her son, the latter only just reinstated as the heir apparent, added their brillance to the throng. And no mother ever appeared prouder or happier over the world's acknowledgment of a son than did Isabella of Spain on that memorable night.

At the close of the performance which dedicated the glorious structure, Garnier, the architect who had conceived its splendors and superintended its fourteen years of building, appeared between lines of Municipal guards on his famous staircase of marble and onyx, and, as at a signal, the multitude, a sea of shifting color, gorgeous gowns and incredible jewels, turned and acclaimed him for the genius that he was. It was an unforgettable night, touched with a fairylike beauty — and another high light of the MacMahon régime.

This president had a positive genius for lending brilliance to those great occasions where stilted formality and tediousness are usually the rule. It seemed to me that even famous beauties flourished during his tenure as they never had before. There was the handsome Comtesse de Villeneuve and the exquisite Marquise de Gallifet. The latter was usually described as "looking like an angel" on account of her delicate, ethereal beauty. Once my father dressed her as one of these heavenly creatures for some costume ball, and so well did the masquerade become her that ever after she could not escape the celestial appellation.

And it was during MacMahon's term that Madame Van Hoffman, an American who had become as Parisian as any Frenchwoman, gave her magnificent re-

ceptions that were attended by all the proud aristocrats of the City of Light. It was one of the daughters of this brilliant hostess who married Baron Stumm, godson of old Bismarck and owner of the enormous German steel works. The other daughter became the wife of the Marquis de Mores, later the Duke de Vallombrosa.

In this gay period the famous Countess de Castiglione, a customer of my father's for a brief time, indulged in some of her more startling escapades. This noblewoman was the personification of the eccentric and became not a little notorious. She was the first to appear in a court train dress or a gown with a skirt trailing a length of goods five or six feet behind her. This costume she completed by sticking a feather straight up in the much bepuffed pompadour of her hair. She wore this extraordinary attire to a ball at the Ministry, and the sensation she created with her funny feather and her amazing train was chattered about for years.

When age made its usual inroads on her beauty, she was inconsolable and shut herself up in her apartment in the Place Vendôme. She denied herself to all her old acquaintances except a very few, and she would only talk to these through a sort of window or opening

in the wall of her room. Ceasing to be a reigning beauty was the great tragedy of her life.

The costume balls also reached their height of extravagance and splendor during MacMahon's presidency. It was then that the much admired Miss Montgomery — she of the clever, mischievous face and the impeccable taste in dress — made a sensation at one of the De Sagan balls by appearing in the striking "Chasseur de Louis XV" costume—tall stick, plumed hat and all — which I had made for her. Her partner that night was a handsome American boy by the name of Ridgway, who was quite a favorite with the women and who later married the lovely Miss Munroe. He also wore a "Chasseur" costume, and as the masquerade was unusually charming and at that time very new, these two "stopped the show", as the Broadway phrase goes.

The Comtesse de Pourtalès, née Bussières, also was a celebrity of that brilliant decade. This charming aristocrat was one of the most beautiful women of the last century, but unfortunately hers was not a camera face; at least, no camera of her era could do it justice. She always used to send me photographs of herself in the various gowns we had made for her. I remember one that was taken just a year before her death in a dress she had worn to the wedding of one of her grand-

A CENTURY OF FASHION

daughters, and another more youthful one which was dedicated to me, but neither gave any idea of the loveliness for which she was celebrated.

Incidentally, in the matter of photographs, invitations and sundry courtesies, our clients were invariably thoughtful and charming. Both Madame de Persigny and Madame de Walewska, staunch adherents of my father, always invited us to attend, either in domino or costume, the various balls they gave in their respective ministries. Baronne de Poilly, who had introduced my father into the most austere and conservative families of the Fauborg and the court when he was just beginning, always did likewise. The baronne was somewhat portly — no defect in that day when plumpness did not matter so long as one's waist was small! — but she had magnificent eyes, white, perfect teeth, and a smile as delightful as its owner was gracious.

After MacMahon, Grévy was made president, and society immediately suffered a total eclipse. Then began an inelegant, bourgeois period in which the receptions and balls were dull, stupid and wholly without distinction. After Grévy came Carnot and then Casimir-Perier, and the swan song of the last remaining trace of social brilliance.

There can be no gainsaying the power politicians

have to make or mar those delightful attributes of the more decorative side of existence, dinners and dances — we called them balls in the seventies — and all such entertainments. They become graceless things unless touched with color and humor, brightness and fugitive social charm. And when society waxes dull, the fashions grow stodgy or, as you call them, Victorian.

After statesmen the mighty ones upon whom the fate of La Mode depends are those women, either of the stage, the half world or the *haut monde*, who are having their little hour in the sun called Fame.

I have been asked so often to tell how a fashion is born, brought up and made ready for its début that it has occurred to me that these paragraphs on clothes and politics afford as good a place as any to describe the genesis of a mode.

The rise and fall of any fashion is the natural manifestation of human perversity. Somehow, somewhere, a great *couturier* conceives the idea for a new model — for instance, the crinoline. At first glimpse it may seem a trifle absurd and most certainly too daring, too conspicuous to appeal to the average conservative woman. But your shrewd designer does not consider the average woman in the beginning. Rather he lines up his clientele in his mind and chooses therefrom a woman



SPECIMEN OF "ALENCON" DRESS," EN FORME", NARROW AT THE TOP
AND WIDE AT THE BOTTOM, A THING NEVER DONE BEFORE

The lace took fourteen years to make





LADY PAGET IN A MEDIAEVAL COSTUME

MME. KATINKA-FEHRY Beginning of fur capes as evening wrap in 1900

like Madame de Metternich, a woman noted for her clothes and her beauty and one who at the same time is so firmly established in whatever position she may occupy, social or otherwise, that she can afford to take the initiative, can risk being different.

Having decided upon his protagonist, your modiste next approaches her and persuades her to wear his new frock. If he is fortunate both in his model and its wearer, the success of his new design will be immediate. Within a week every woman in the circle in which it was introduced will have ordered a dress of a similar pattern. Within a month, women in less exalted walks of life will be wearing replicas of it. Within two months the much heralded new mode will have become an old story. And within three the women will have wearied of it and will be trying to find some way to vary it, to make it individual or distinctive. Unfortunately, at this stage they usually resort to embellishment or exaggeration in their effort to improve upon the original, and a graceful and distinguished pattern, as in the case of the crinoline, soon loses its former charm and becomes absurd or vulgar. And once a mode is vulgar, it is dead. Then the poor couturier who originated it must cudgel his brain to find something to take its place. Usually he succeeds, for the designer with

one idea does not remain a designer long; and in a week or so some charming and important woman appears at the theater or the races in a lovely gown, the lines of whose skirt and sleeves and bodice show no kinship with its predecessor — and lo, a new mode is born.

Because of such exigencies of fashion, the mind of the *couturier* must ever be on the difficult task of devising something new. And he dares overlook no detail of life, no matter how humble, that may carry suggestion or inspiration.

For instance, the famous tunique dress — that brought about a sartorial revolution in the brilliant Second Empire — was inspired by a peasant woman pinning her skirt back over her petticoat. It did not matter that neither the peasant, her humble gown nor her coarse petticoat were in themselves attractive. It was enough that something about the three suggested to my father that two skirts might be superimposed upon each other with infinite grace and charm, and that these two skirts might be made of different materials, different colors, in an innumerable variety of designs and with many and sundry trimmings.

My father was especially fortunate in having Madame de Metternich as well as my mother as his protagonists. How well I remember the day my mother and La Prin-

cesse introduced the scandalous fashion of appearing out-of-doors without a wrap!

At the time they committed this delightful outrage it was considered indecent for any woman to appear on the street or at the races — any place, in fact, except in the house — without a mantle, a shawl or a thick opaque wrap of some sort with which to conceal the outlines of her figure and especially of her waist from the vulgar gaze. Even in summer time it was considered highly improper to appear unprotected by a cloak of some variety. This gesture of exaggerated modesty at length wearied my father, and he set about to banish it. He made a dress of vivid green - later to be called Metternich green — for Madame de Metternich and a purple and blue taffeta for my mother, and persuaded them to wear these frocks to the races without mantle or cloak of any sort. Instead, a small lace mantilla, wholly revealing, fluttered from Madame de Metternich's shoulders with no pretense of covering the front of her bodice; and a slight drapery of lace that melted into an arrangement of various buoyant taffetas edged with Chantilly served my mother as a wrap.

When my mother and La Princesse arrived at the races in their charming, cloakless state, they created as great a sensation as they would have in tights. But

two weeks later there was not a wrap to be seen in the tribunes, and all the ladies seemed quite at ease, in spite of their suddenly revealed figures. Since then women have always gone about in summer without wraps, if it pleased them, and even upon occasion appeared in winter in close-fitting cloaks that would have been considered outrageous before that day La Princesse wore her new frock of Metternich green to the Grand Prix without a coat.

Another fashion my father inaugurated to vary the mode was that of using kimono or Japanese sleeves with the huge armholes, in coats. These he called Tai Koun, in honor of the brother of the Emperor of Japan, who attended the Paris Exposition of 1867.

The first sealskin coat was another answer he gave to the cry for something different, something new. Before he introduced this garment, that was destined for such unbelievable popularity, fur had never been used in coats except as a lining.

This lining was known as "à la Russe", and I remember a certain fast woman returning from Russia and creating quite a stir with such a fur-lined coat. In my youth only coachmen wore fur on the outside. And as for fur being used as it is to-day! A woman of the Victorian era would as soon have put a band of cotton

A CENTURY OF FASHION

wadding around the bottom of her coat! Other times, other manners.

Then, too, chance plays no mean part in the inception of a mode. For example, Mlle. de Fontages was out hunting one day and in the heat of the chase lost her hat. This contretemps was followed by her hair tumbling down. Then it blew about and got in her eyes, and at last, in exasperation, she snatched a ribbon from her bodice and tied the truant locks fast at the nape of her neck. When Louis XV, who was one of the party, saw her thus he declared that he had never seen her so lovely. And it goes without saying that every woman within ear-shot appeared the next day with her hair done à la Fontages.

Outside of the drawing-room and the race course, fashions originate chiefly at the theater. A great artist can take a frock — one, perhaps, for which its designer had not dared hope popularity — and so imbue it with her charm, her personality and her grace that it gains distinction. Then all the women in her audiences immediately adopt it, foolishly believing that it will lend them something of the artist's loveliness.

A tale goes, for example, of a woman in great financial straits who, to obtain a little money, took some yellow material which she had to Rachel and begged

her to buy it. This stuff tempted the great actress not at all, but her kind heart got the better of her good taste, and she bought it, not believing that it would ever be of the slightest use to her. Later, however, in going through her things, she came across it and, being in an economical mood, decided to have it made up to wear in one of her rôles. And curiously enough, when she appeared in it, her audiences, never stopping to consider the true source of their enchantment, took it to their hearts and then and there the vogue for yellow dresses began.

Another time when fashion stepped over the footlights into more aristocratic quarters was in the case of the *panier* costume, so popular at the time of Louis XIV. A casual study of any of the paintings of the period will reveal that it was the fashion for both men and women of the ballet to wear exceedingly elaborate costumes, a distinguishing feature of which was a flared effect over the hips. Little by little this characteristic detail was exaggerated until at last it became necessary to reinforce the flare with small steel hoops, known as *paniers*.

About the time that this basket costume became firmly established, a charming creature, more notable for her beauty and for the passions she inspired than

for her histrionic ability, appeared on the theatrical horizon and excited the jealousy of a certain great lady of the court. The latter, not to be outdone in anything by an actress, observed her pretty costume, with the sly flares over the hips, and adopted it forthwith. Her next move was to present herself at court in a magnificent dress "à panier." It was, after all, such a very charming fashion that it was quickly adopted and endured a long time and even, in the end, became the official model to be worn at all royal receptions. For instance, while Marie Antoinette might permit her ladies in waiting to come to her intimate affairs without paniers, etiquette would not allow her to extend them any such privilege on official occasions.



CELEBRITIES OF THE STAGE



OF THE artists who set the fashion for the aristocrat and the commoner, the House of Worth came in contact with an infinite variety. The first to cross my own horizon was Madame Ristori. The great Ristori used to come to dine with us occasionally, and was the soul of friendliness. She was the contemporary, emulator and rival of Rachel. For a number of years she was the star of the Odéon, and her success in that theater was only comparable with that of the memorable Duse forty years later. There was a great polemic in the press of the time over whether Madame Ristori or Rachel was the greater. Ristori played all Rachel's famous rôles, including Phèdre and Médée; and the controversy thus had ample material for heated comparisons. My father made a few costumes for Ristori, but she came to him chiefly for her modern dresses.



ADA REHAN IN A RENAISSANCE COSTUME



MRS. JAMES BROWN POTTER AS JULIET

Once, I remember, he made a mantle for her that was nothing but an Arabian burnoose of white gauze and satin with a silken hood, and persuaded her to wear it as an evening wrap. What a sensation she made!

Unfortunately I saw Madame Ristori only after she was already old. It was in an act of "Marie Stuart" given at some charitable performance and, being only fifteen, I thought her rather "marquée." But I was old enough to recognize that in spite of her age, her artistry was still of the first order.

After Madame Ristori came Madame Dosch, the creator of "La Dame aux Camélias" in Paris. I saw her in this play of Dumas fifteen years after its première, and her performance was still perfect and infinitely moving. No one except Duse ever surpassed her in this rôle, and of course Duse's interpretation was along diametrically opposed lines. Madame Dosch followed "tradition."

Another star of the Comédie and of the House of Worth was Madame Arnoult Plessis. As she and the director of the Comédie often had totally different conceptions of the rôles in which she appeared, they used to have great arguments about her costumes. For instance, he would pretend to be quite beside himself because she would insist upon breaking away from the

banalities of tradition and wearing dresses much too long for the stage in plays like "La Maison Penarvan." The result of all her efforts to dress originally were storms of criticism or pæans of praise in the press, which kept her either down in the valley or up on the mountain top emotionally the whole time. My father was the one who carried out all of her ideas, interesting and otherwise, and made all of her costumes, including those she wore in Célimène.

The first artist ever to have the honor of having an empress wear an exact replica of one of her stage dresses was Marie Delaporte. The Empress Eugénie as a rule detested any dress she saw on the stage; but Delaporte, a charming artist, not pretty, but utterly fascinating, broke down Her Majesty's prejudice by appearing in a frock so enchanting that the empress ordered us to copy it for her exactly and immediately. Mlle. Delaporte was an intimate friend of Alexandre Dumas, and this famous novelist would often come with her to the House of Worth and help her in selecting her costumes.

Another writer not unknown to our salons was Sardou. He used to come with Madame Antonine, who created the principal rôle in "Rabagas." Madame Antonine never became one of the great names of the

[160]

A CENTURY OF FASHION

theater, but she did acquire a most enviable reputation for being well dressed. I am certain, however, that this was no fault of Sardou's, for I remember that my father had great difficulty in persuading him to accept a pink dress with cherry ribbons, a combination whose smartness upset all of his preconceived notions about the true association of colors.

Madame Antonine was instrumental in bringing Sarah Bernhardt to us. The Divine Sarah began by telling my father that her dresses had been ruined by a competing house, and that she must have two others made within the next three days. In the course of their conversation my father gathered that it was not two dresses that she needed for this play, but five. Divining that some other couturier was making the remaining three, he called Madame Bernhardt to account and informed her that he did not care to share any order with another house. Sarah hastened to reassure him and emphasized this reassurance by immediately ordering the other three, which my father went ahead and made. However, in spite of her fair words, the great actress did not wear the last three she had ordered at the first presentation. The first two she used, but the others were set aside in favor of the products of the competing house. I have never known my father to

be more incensed at what he considered a piece of cheap trickery. The next day he retaliated by sending his cashier to Madame Bernhardt with a bill for the five dresses and a note informing her that unless she settled immediately he would attach her salary. The procedure was somewhat energetic, but no more, everything considered, than Sarah deserved. Needless to say, we never saw Madame Bernhardt again.

Few with whom we came in contact, however, were of Bernhardt's kind. Marie Favart's word was as good as her bond. This actress was one of our greatest protagonists, and much admired by the Empress. She had a rare emotional gift, and she created the leading rôles in a number of Émile Augier's plays and appeared in several of Victor Hugo's dramas. The last time I saw her was in the rôle of the grandmother in "L' Arlesienne." She was noted for her ability to impart a delightfully original touch to everything she did and everything she wore.

Three stars who should be touched upon here, if only briefly, are Mademoiselle Fargeuil, Madame Pascal and Madame Blanche Pierson. Mademoiselle Fargeuil, who is all but forgotten now, was brought to us by Émile de Girardin, in several of whose plays she appeared. Madame Pierson, who ended her career at

the Française playing duègnes, had personified youth and beauty at the Gymnase. Madame Pascal went to St. Petersburg during the time that my father was responsible for her costumes, and had excellent success there.

But it remained for Sophie Croizette to wear the two beautiful costumes — she made her début in them which are still preserved as "documents" at the Comédie. She was a slim, lovely thing, with a warm voice and a provocative mouth. After her first appearances we saw nothing of her for a long time. Policy or politics at the Comédie were, of course, responsible for this temporary eclipse. And then Sarah Bernhardt suddenly deserted that theater and Mademoiselle Croizette was called upon to take her place on two days' notice. As Croizette had acquired a Rubens-like opulence during her enforced retirement and Madame Sarah was always as thin as a rake, it goes without saying that none of Bernhardt's costumes would fit the lovely Sophie. After a few horrified struggles with them, she flew to my father and begged him to come to the rescue. This he did by designing and making a costume of a dark, stamped velvet for her in something like twentyfour hours. But even in his hurry he had managed to catch the spirit of the character, and M. Perrin, the

director of the Française, could not thank him enough, not only for his promptness in helping them out of a difficult situation and enabling them to carry through the scheduled series of performances without interruption, but for devising a dress so suitable.

Jane Samary, famous for her gift of gorgeous laughter, only passed through the Française and the House of Worth. Samary was a great artist in gay rôles, the soubrettes of the repertoire.

Marie Toller, a member of the Comédie, who created two or three important rôles, but who achieved no great reputation, wore the first Louis XV costume of perfectly plain white satin that my father ever copied from the picture by Nattier.

Worth *père* also made both the stage and modern dresses for the two Brohan sisters, Augustine of the remarkable talent and wit, and Madeleine of the great beauty, from which not even an inclination to stoutness could detract. Augustine was shockingly nearsighted, and I remember once hearing her ask what some color was before going into raptures over it!

But the quaintest request my father ever received was made by pretty and gifted Marie Louise Marcy, when he was ready to make her costume for Célimène in the "Misanthrope." Marie Louise, who was very



LILY LANGTRY IN A TEAGOWN

LILY LANGTRY
About 1895

young when she made her first appearance in this rôle, kept insisting that my father make the costume as severe and sedate as possible because "Célimène was an old woman of twenty-eight." Her other costumes, including those for "Le Demimonde", I made myself. She did not remain long at the Française. An unusually wealthy marriage brought about premature retirement.

Two actresses whom we saw only occasionally were Mademoiselle Muller, an artist with a great gift, who left the Comédie too soon, and Mademoiselle Reichemberg, who only retired at sixty, after a lifetime of playing ingénues, rôles in which, I must confess, she was unequalled even after she was many a decade older than the law allows any flapper to be.

It is only fitting that I end this list of the artists of the Comédie Française known to the House of Worth with Madame Bartet. It would be presumptuous for me to attempt any analysis of this woman's greatness, whom the whole world has called "divine." She was, as many know, the first artist to receive the Legion of Honor. I knew her for over thirty years, and made the costumes for her farewell and all of her dresses after she left the stage.

Apart from the artists of the Française, there were many others in the world of the theater who, at one time

or another, graced the gowns of my father's inspiration. One of these was Lily Langtry, a London belle known familiarly as the "Jersey Lily." It was a title well merited by the incomparable beauty of her shoulders and skin. Hers was not a classical type, although the line of her nose was Greek, but it was most fascinating. She had a well-shaped head, beautiful eyes, magnificent teeth and a figure for which she was famous.

Mrs. Langtry introduced the first jersey costume. This consisted of a blue pleated skirt united to a tight fitting bodice by a red sash. It created a great sensation when she appeared in it at some sporting event, but obviously two thirds of its success was due to her perfect body. It proved to be another of the endless fashions introduced by actresses to ensnare the public imagination and become a craze. Unfortunately, few had figures even approximating that of the Jersey Lily, and some of the feminine shortcomings the jersey suit revealed during its reign were tragic.

Mrs. Langtry, who was famous as a beauty in London before she went on the stage, met with great theatrical success in England, a success I always attributed to her fine figure, translucent skin and ability to wear clothes as much as to any talent she may have possessed.

[166]

A CENTURY OF FASHION

Among other plays she appeared in "The School for Scandal", for which my father made her costumes. Her first husband was Edward Langtry; later she married Hugo de Bathe, and after that we did not see her so frequently.

But of all the innovations and sartorial revolutions brought about by the great women of the stage one of the greatest, to my mind, was that accomplished by the American singer, Madame Emma Eames. Madame Eames was a bright, particular star at the opera not so many years ago, where her great beauty and fine voice enabled her to follow Patti in "Romeo and Juliet" with the success of which the whole world knows. One day, just before she was leaving on one of her trips to America, she came to me to order some costumes, including those for Marguerite in "Faust."

Now, the traditional Marguerite costume had been the bane of my existence from the day I had first seen it, in my thirteenth year, on the great Christine Nilsson. It was always to me an anachronism to see a young bourgeois, very little more than a peasant girl, attend a kermess in a white cashmere dress with a train two meters long, and later come out in the church scene in a similar absurdity, only this time in lilac. When

Madame Eames came to me, I immediately saw my opportunity to fly in the face of this idiotic tradition with more appropriate costumes.

When I told her what I had in mind, this keenly intelligent woman was delighted with the suggestion and gave me permission to go ahead and dress Marguerite as a girl in her position would be dressed. The first-act costume I made of beige cloth with réséda green corselet. I lined it with lilac and added pale blue ribbons in crevés to give it a touch of color and to preserve the suggestion of youth. The other costume I fashioned of black. The headdress to go with it was of green velvet with a gold embroidered brim and a white veil to pull tight under the chin, after the manner of the portraits by Holbein. When Madame Eames appeared in this last costume with its black skirt draped over her arm and just a glimpse of the black-andwhite petticoat showing, the dress had a little triumph all its own. This, naturally, was a matter of great satisfaction to me, not only for personal reasons, but because I was so happy to see the theater at last ready to accept costumes in keeping with the circumstances of the characters in the play.

Madame Eames later became famous for her costumes, particularly in America. Most of them we



EMMA EAMES AS MARGUERITE IN "FAUST" Costume specially created for her by J. P. Worth



EMMA EAMES IN A CONCERT DRESS
About 1905

EMMA EAMES AS THE COUNTESS IN "LE NOZZE DI FIGARO"

A CENTURY OF FASHION

copied from historical documents. She was most conscientious and, when the character called for it, would even allow us to make her appear stout, a concession for which a beautiful woman cannot be given too much credit.

Another American who became a most faithful and amiable client was Madame Nordica. She sang only a little in Paris, but her career in America, England and at Bayreuth was both long and magnificent.

Two singers who were responsible for no costume reforms or interesting innovations, but who were loyal adherents of my father, were Adelina Patti and Madame Albani. Of Patti I have already spoken. We were her exclusive *couturier*, and my parents were on most friendly terms with her. It was she who brought Madame Albani to us. Madame Albani, who later became a great favorite with Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, and left the stage when she married Mr. Gye, always used to say to my father, "You make me look pretty, and I'll take care of the rest."

Then there was the adorable Sybil Sanderson, who died so very young, for whom we made a few costumes and all of her town dresses, and Madame Rose Caron, for whom we made no costumes, but a number of concert or evening dresses.

Madame Melba came to us through one of our Belgian friends. She has always been most faithful to us, is still our client and I hope will be for a long time to come. Naturally through the years we made her countless charming dresses both for the stage and to wear in private life. But perhaps the most striking was the wedding dress and court mantle which she used in the marriage scene in "Lohengrin." This bridal costume she wore both in America and in Russia, when she sang Elsa; and the czarina sent for Melba between the acts at a performance of "Lohengrin" in order that she might examine and admire its magnificence at close range. It was of gold cloth, solidly embroidered and edged with a broad Byzantine border, on which there were medallions of angels with colored wings such as may be seen in the ancient frescoes. A distinct departure from the traditional Elsa costume!

Christine Nilsson was brought to us by my father's associate, Mr. Boberg. Miss Nilsson was a tall, timid girl, whose great reserve of manner gave no hint of her genius as an emotional actress and singer. She had a wonderful career at the Théâtre Lyrique, where she created the rôle of the Queen of the Night and sang it in the original key, a thing that few can do. She was pleasantly modest and without conceit, for all she under-

stood her real value. Hers were super triumphs, and on the nights she sang I have often seen the entire stage completely covered with flowers. Not the least of her success was in America. I remember her returning from a great season there and telling my father that no one would have gone to see her had it not been for his costumes!

Another artist who insisted that her costumes had been the making of her American tour was Genevieve Ward. Whether her name is remembered to day I do not know, but when she first came to us she was considered a great tragedienne. My father, who was very busy the day she made her first visit to us, entrusted her to my care, and I proceeded to make her thirty costumes, my firstlings—alas, how very long ago! When the costumes were finished, which I had fashioned entirely according to my own ideas, I showed them to my father and had the satisfaction of having him declare them perfect. And my father was not given to flattery. Quite the contrary.

When my father entrusted the filling of this important order of Miss Ward's to me, he was only carrying out his policy of preparing my brother and myself for his retirement by giving us opportunity to acquire the experience and the practical knowledge

necessary to enable us to take up his great burden when he should be called upon to put it down. Strangely enough, sometimes when we were particularly successful in accomplishing some task he had set us, he was inclined to be a little jealous. But we loved him enough to take great care not to hurt his feelings by seeming to want to step into his shoes before our time. Mostly we were successful in saving his pride; for sincere affection is a great teacher of tact.

He was a Protestant, but his religion was less a creed than a line of conduct to which he adhered through life. This consisted chiefly of injuring no one in so far as it was humanly possible, and of doing as much good as was within his power — a very simple, apparently very easy and yet enormously difficult code.

He never went to church on Sunday, but he never passed a house of God, whether Catholic or Protestant, without entering to meditate. And on every New Year's Day, the first thing he did in the morning was to take us to Sainte Clotilde, there to spend three quarters of an hour in silent worship. Oftener than not there was no service in progress on those cold winter mornings when we stole into that dim cathedral. Then he always began the day, every day, by devoting ten or fifteen minutes to reading a chapter from the Bible.



NELLIE MELBA AS VIOLETTA IN "LA TRAVIATA"



COURT TRAIN MADE FOR MELBA TO WEAR IN "LOHENGRIN" Gold cloth was not used at the time

Often at the conclusion of his reading he would make some salient comment on it. He always referred to his early morning devotion as an excellent moral exercise with which to start the day.

Another practice of his was always to contribute to some charity when good fortune smiled upon him, when a son was born, or some hazardous venture succeeded. He considered this sharing of his happiness with those less fortunate obligatory. And, as he did not wish to show any religious partisanship, he always divided his gift into two equal parts, one of which went to the minister and the other to the priest. He had little use for religious forms, and would never have considered such a thing as going to confession. He believed that an outstretched hand to help some poor wretch was a greater tribute to God than the burning of a thousand candles.

However, where his children were concerned, he yielded readily to my mother's wish that they be brought up in the Catholic religion, which was her own. Therefore I am nominally a Catholic, but in later years I have tried to follow my father's religion more and more. It is not easy. One is always asking oneself, "Did I give full measure, or did I just try to get by?" "Was I overly rude to that silly old woman,

when it would not have hurt me to be a little kind?" "Have I misjudged that man or, without thinking, injured this one?" "And if I have, how can I make amends?" But it is more real to me than a vested choir and incense and a droning priest. It is more Christlike.

Although my father was English born and bred, his turn of mind, tastes and aspirations could only find adequate expression in France. To him France was his real fatherland. He never disowned his own country, but his feeling for that of his adoption was so much deeper that there could be no comparison. He always used to say, when people remarked upon the way he had helped build up the industries of France, particularly those of Lyons, "But how could I help doing so? I owe everything to France. She enabled me to express myself, gave me every opportunity to succeed in the work I was fitted for; she has been everything to me. It seems to me only fair that I prove my gratitude to her by doing everything in my power to bring her prosperity."

As I stated earlier, he always refused to use any material that was not of French manufacture, and waged a vigorous campaign against the Anglomania that still held France enthralled. This craze for English fashions and stuffs was supposed to have come into

being during the "Restoration." It was then at any rate that those political refugees, including Louis XVIII, Charles X and Louis Philippe, who had spent their exile in England, returned to France. Personally I believe that the French infatuation for things British began even earlier, say, in the time of Louis XVI. At least, if one can judge by the inscriptions on the various etchings of that period such as "Polonaise à l'anglaise", "Lévite à l'anglaise", and so forth, it did. Then, too, in the pictures of Joshua Reynolds and Gainsborough one may observe that English styles were in high favor in the time of Marie Antoinette. Therefore, I am convinced that Anglomania possessed France long before the "Restoration." Be that as it may, it is certain that my father conquered it by prevailing upon those still faithful to the traditions of Louis Philippe to abandon Queen Victoria, who was dictator of styles in London, as a model and to bring back the "cup" of fashion to Paris.

During the War of 1870 my father behaved as the best of French citizens. He did not enlist, but he did take care of the wounded with all his means and with all his heart.

He was exceedingly superstitious, and attached great importance to apparently trivial happenings. Like

many English people, he firmly believed in the influence of the moon upon business. And he was always convinced that when he saw the new moon through a window, a curtain or a cloud that he would encounter difficulties in the shop until the next new moon. But when he saw the moon quite unveiled in her first quarter he was equally certain that he would have great success and prosperity all that month. It is not for me to judge or interpret this superstition. It is quite common in England, and one that my father undoubtedly acquired during his childhood there.

Incidentally his firm faith in omens kept him from making one of the best strokes of business imaginable and that was the purchase of the building that houses the firm of Worth in the Rue de la Paix. Although he paid for it many times over, he would never permit us to buy it, for fear that it might change his luck and jeopardize his success. He was approached twice by its owners during his lifetime, and both times he refused emphatically and fearfully. And as his will and wishes were always sacred to us, we never opposed him or brought any pressure to bear to persuade him to purchase the place. And to this day, after more than a half century of occupancy, Number 7 Rue de la Paix is not owned by Worth.

[176]

Another manifestation of my father's intense superstitiousness was his dread of the tenth of March. His friend, the Duc de Morny, had died on that date, and as he advanced in years he came to fear the day more and more. Each time he contracted some slight illness at the beginning of that month, he was always very anxious about it until the tenth day passed. It was a superstition in which there must have been something prophetic, for the tenth of March turned out to be the actual date of his death.

In 1895 he returned from the south of France, Nice and Monte Carlo after a pleasant and unbothered vacation there. Shortly after his arrival at Suresnes he took his grandchildren to see a drama called "Napoleon" at the Porte Saint Martin on a Sunday. He caught cold on this outing, and on Tuesday when he came to the shop he said to me, "I don't seem to be feeling so well. I don't believe I'll come down to business to-morrow. I believe a day's rest would do me good." The remainder of that day he spent lying down, but when he went home in the evening he assured me that he would be down again on Thursday.

The evening of the next day, Wednesday, I went to see how he was and found the house at Suresnes in an uproar. The doctor was there and told me that

my father was very ill; that his lungs were congested, and as the trouble seemed to be spreading very rapidly he was a little fearful. Everything possible was done but his illness was complicated by an old and very serious case of diabetes, and he grew steadily worse until the following Sunday, his dreaded 10th of March, when he died.

There are no words to express the shock his death was to me. I had always seen him so strong and sturdy, so unconquerable, so full of life, that it had never occurred to me that he might die. A bolt of lightning striking next me would not have stunned me more. At last I came to understand what being ill from grief meant. Then, added to that dreadful week of sorrow and despair, was that most terrible ordeal for the bereaved, a "magnificent funeral."

Over two thousand people came to pay their last homage to my father as he lay in our drawing-room, which I had had transformed into a chapel. After that we had to walk to the "Temple de l'Etoile", where we again had to shake hands with over two thousand more who had come to tell us of their sorrow over our loss. The strain of this last proved insupportable, and I was taken home delirious and given morphine.

He was buried at Suresnes as he had wished, and [178]



MISS KATE BRICE IN A VELASQUEZ COSTUME, ORDERED BY TELEGRAM AND MADE IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

The hoops are somewhat flattened as this was taken after one night's dancing



MME. DE JEANZÉ IN PRESENTATION DRESS

I had the monument that he planned erected. I added only one detail, and that was the chapel over his tomb where my mother might go to pray. He had not expected to go first and had not thought that such a place would be necessary.

After the announcement of his death, letters and cablegrams poured in from all the four corners of the earth. All of them were filled with the sincere grief their writers felt over the loss of this genius who had ever been an influence for good. We have two albums as big as dictionaries filled with these messages and with newspaper articles. They came from kings and queens, aristocrats and peasants, the bourgeois and the artists and paupers and millionaires. But the one that expressed best what he meant to them all was the long telegram that came from the exiled Eugénie which ended, "In my prosperity and in my sorrows he was always my most faithful and devoted friend. Eugénie."



QUEENS AND THEIR WARDROBES



AFTER my father's death, my brother Gaston and I undertook to carry on the traditions of the House of Worth. Every one thought that with its presiding genius gone, the establishment would soon pass into oblivion. Instead, it rose like the phænix from its own ashes. This, and the fact that for the threescore years of our existence our House has increased each year, was due solely to the wise management and administration of my brother. Gaston was born with a genius for finance. It was a gift he exercised not only for the development of our own firm in particular, but for the benefit of the dressmaking industry in general. He organized a Chambre Syndicale to safeguard the interests of the couturiers, who by that time had increased greatly in numbers, and a Société de Secours Mutuel (a Society for Mutual Help) which provided a sick

benefit and a pension fund (caisse de retraite) for employees — all things ignored until my brother turned his attention to them. After that, at the request of the Secretary of Commerce, he compiled a book of statistics and interesting data that convinced the authorities, by its very figures, of the commercial importance of the couturier and the necessity of protecting him, if need be.

Then, so far as our own House was concerned, he was responsible for the opening of our very successful branch in London in the last years of the nineteenth century. At first his idea had been to have a sort of office in that city, where our British clientele might come and order gowns to be made in Paris. But he soon found that our London customers wanted to be shown models, and so the office developed into an establishment that included not only salons where models were shown, but elaborate workrooms where these models might be copied. Owing to the fact that materials are rather cheaper and general expenses are lighter in England — we need display only twenty or thirty models there, whereas we must present five hundred in Paris — and that the models copied are not exclusive, we are able to make dresses about five or ten per cent. cheaper in England than in Paris. The chief

attraction which this arrangement has for our clientele is that it makes it unnecessary for those on a flying trip to Paris to spend four or five days at the *couturiers* for fittings.

There was only one period — that of the War of 1870, during which all business was at a standstill — when we did not progress. My mother and myself, having no flair for money matters, were very fortunate in having such a son and brother, for he held our welfare very close to his heart, was scrupulous in the care of our finances, and I must say made whatever fortune we possess.

He had his own suite of offices — as I had mine — his own staff, complete freedom in his province and the greatest confidence of my mother and myself. And into the twenty years of our partnership — perhaps because our attitudes were so diametrically opposed — there never entered a jarring or disagreeable note. Not long ago the solicitor who has taken care of our affairs and our father's before us, exclaimed to me, "But I have never seen such a family as you Worths. Usually I find nothing except bickering between relatives. But you never seem to be able to give each other enough." I told him that was because the affection we feel for each other and the trust we have in each other is real

and not the conventional pose. From the beginning we always turned to each other. In money matters my mother and myself would always say, "Ask Gaston. He is the only one who can give you any information about that." And in anything pertaining to dress, materials or design, Gaston always referred interlocutors to me, on whom my father's mantle had fallen.

The first thing we did after the death of this beloved dictator of fashion was to send a huge order for the most magnificent materials known to the silk manufacturers of Lyons. We did this to prove to them and to their town that neither had cause to fear that the death of their great benefactor and protector would affect their industry. Our one idea, as our father's had been, was to develop the industries de luxe of France, to carry on his tradition of using only the best in fabrics, which incidentally was one of the glories of the firm, to design and submit to our clientele only such material as could not be obtained elsewhere. All this we were able to do until the last terrible war, that destroyed so many things, came along and despoiled us.

First, it took our skilled workmen. Then, before others could be trained, machinery had stepped in and taken the place of human hands to a great extent, and

certain magnificent materials cannot be made by machinery. For, although it would seem to the uninitiated eye that 1926 saw more gorgeous stuffs worn than any other in the history of glorious materials, it is the old story of "all that glisters is not gold." These silver and gold brocades that are having such a great vogue are born of chemical processes that allow the use of gilt and brass. Such treated fabrics are much cheaper to manufacture than silk.

In fact, true silk has almost become as much a thing of the past as the dinosaur. The reasons for this are many. For one thing, Japan has a terrific exchange. Then the silk market, for the most part, is located in London, where everything has to be paid for in pounds. And all this maladjustment of the world's finances has placed poor France with her diminished franc in practically an impossible position as a purchasing agent. A raw material, which would have cost a hundred francs before the war, would, even if available to-day, bring from seven to eight hundred francs. Faced with this obstacle of exchange, the silk manufacturers of Lyons, who did not want to close their factories, conceived the brilliant idea of making materials from the residue of silk. In other words, they cover the chain of the tissue with a thin coat of silk and then combine it with

a quantity of metal thread. Moreover, instead of being woven with dyed threads, as was formerly the custom, the fabric is dyed after manufacture, which gives it a peculiar hue. The metal thread that takes the place of the old-time silk in these modern stuffs is four times as cheap.

The science that has made a changing of silk is also making velvet other than it seems. It, too, is dyed after manufacture — a process that makes it more supple, it is true, but at the same time makes its quality fall short of the old standards. In spite of these expediencies on the part of the manufacturers of fine fabrics, the cost of even such raw materials as they use has raised the price per meter from thirty to three hundred francs. Sometimes I wonder what would happen if there were a renaissance of the fashions of thirty years ago, when it took twenty-five meters to make a dress!

And not only has the price per yard of fabrics increased, but the price of trimmings as well. For instance, consider those little paste beads which are used so much to-day on the unescapable beaded frock. They used to sell by the gross, the twelve dozen. To-day they are sold by the piece. Before the war we made a dress for Ida Rubenstein to wear in "La Dame aux Camélias" which was trimmed with seven thousand

"diamonds", the cups of which were hand-painted. Make for yourself the calculation: seven thousand "diamonds" at twenty-five centimes a piece — to-day's price!

Along with the cost of materials and trimmings the couturier is confronted with the increased cost of labor. In 1912 he paid a seamstress a hundred and fifty francs to make a dress. Now he finds it difficult to get it done for five hundred francs. He used to allow a premier d'atelier fifteen thousand francs a year. Now he must give her a hundred thousand, and finds it difficult to keep her even at that price.

But to return to the first year of this amazing century!

In 1900 we took part in the Exposition of Paris. When my brother was first approached, he came to me and asked me what I thought of it, and I answered, "Yes, I think it would be a good idea to take part, but only upon condition. We must show the models on wax figures simply posed, and the evening dresses must be shown by artificial light, as it is impossible for daylight to do justice to the *robes de soirée*." He agreed with me, and after we had worked out the details of this idea, as *chef de classe* he called the exhibitors together and laid our plan before them. It was to divide



THE FASHION IN 1895



DONNA FRANCA FLORIO IN A DRESS AND COAT MADE BY WORTH $About \ 1900$

the big hall into four parts, into which were to be put settings representing the four seasons of the year. For instance, the background for autumn was to be the Longchamps race course; for winter a great hall in a mansion of an aristocrat; for summer a resort at the seaside; for spring a defile. Places in these settings were to be chosen or drawn by lot by the exhibitors. Roughly, this was the plan.

However, our colleagues would have none of it, declared it to be bizarre, a masquerade, undignified and not to be considered. My brother gracefully submitted to the wishes of the majority. He put our collection in with the others and owing to the fact that there were more exhibitors than adequate space, courteously selected one of the dark corners of the hall.

But I, pursuing our original plan, took a little stand in a corner. In this I put a copy of a Louis XVI drawing-room and staged therein incidents from English life. The models represented a great lady dressed in the regulation court costume, three feathers and all, with her young sister whom she was to present to the queen; a lady reclining on a sofa in a splendid tea gown, her tiny sister offering tea to her guests; a maid holding a manteau soirée; a lady in a white tailleur. These fragments of scenes allowed the use of all materials from

cloth to brocade, and all styles, from the most elaborate to the uniform of the maid. Yet they were fitted together with such due regard to reality that those who saw the set could not exclaim enough over it. Its sensation was such that it became necessary to station a policeman before it in order to keep the crowd moving and during the six months the Exposition endured it was necessary to replace the floor twice.

Nowadays, of course, wax figures are no longer a novelty, and such displays are quite common. But then they were a daring innovation. Our competitors, convinced at last that there might be something in such a bizarre masquerade, regretted vociferously that they had not listened to our plan.

One of my first clients after I assumed my father's mantle as designer for the House of Worth was the pretty Duchess of Newcastle, a daughter of Mr. Hope, the rich banker, who for a time owned the ill-starred Blue Diamond. I was commissioned to make her presentation dress, and was rather nervous over such an important assignment. However, I was fortunate enough to make a success of it. It was of satin, almost white, as is the wrong side of poplar leaves, trimmed after the fashion of Louis XVI, with lace made of microscopic paillettes, which repeated on the satin the

design of a very fine old Alençon. Sprays of roses tied these embroidered wreaths. The court train was of velvet the color of poplar leaves, embroidered in silver and lined with pink satin. Its wearer had the typical lily-like complexion of the English and, in the costume's moonlight tints, was exquisite.

Others who came to me when I was trying to fill my father's place were the Duchess of Bedford, the Duchess of Westminster, the Marchioness of Winchester and the Duchess of Portland. The latter possessed an amazing collection of jewels set in the ornate manner of the nineties and always, in spite of the fact that she dressed with the utmost simplicity, attracted general attention when in her box at the opera. Lady Bulwer-Lytton, wife of the Viceroy of India, who was as charming as the Duchess of Portland and who often came with her, was another customer. Lady Lytton left a notable reputation for elegance in India, which she declared we had helped her to earn by the splendid collection of dresses we had made for her to wear in that country. Both she and the viceroy were very fond of my father, and before his death often came to Suresnes, the home that was his great hobby, to visit with him over a cup of tea with all that charming simplicity so characteristic of them.

Another among our English clientele was the pretty Lady Heléne Vincent, whose beauty was perpetuated in a portrait à la antique, in which she appeared barefoot and clad in a simple white drapery. Then we had the famous Margot Asquith, who, when she was Miss Tennant, used to rejoice the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) with her imitations in costume of Loie Fuller, famous eccentric dancer. Lady Asquith was not the only one to amuse the prince — Lady Naylor-Leyland, née Miss Chamberlain, a delightful American, who was a favorite in London on account of her wit and beauty, was another. Lady Naylor-Leyland's fun was all the more effective because she always seemed so much in earnest and had such a deep voice.

She was the one for whom I once made a dress in two hours. To do so I must confess that I had to use much ingenuity. She came to me one day, a little before six, and said desolately, "Mr. Worth, I have just arrived from London and found an invitation to dine at the Tuileries Garden waiting for me. The Prince of Wales is to be the guest of honor. What am I to do?" For the moment I was nonplussed, particularly when she added, "Especially as I'm in mourning." I stared at her a moment, utterly at a loss and vastly embarrassed at seeming to fail her. After a bit I heard myself say,



SLIGHT MOURNING DRESS WORN BY J. P. WORTH'S DAUGHTER AT A BALL ABOUT 1900



almost without volition, "Let me take all the trimming off that dress you have on." Then I sent for an exquisite white lace which I draped over the denuded frock. This I fastened with a great sash of white satin tied with black flowers, and at eight o'clock, a little more than an hour later, she was in the Tuileries Garden, waiting for His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales. When her friends commented upon her charming new frock, its value was doubled in their eyes when she told them that at six it had not existed.

Along with Lady Naylor-Leyland, there was Lady Dufferin, late Marchioness of Ava, and Lady Warwick, who were most faithful to our House. However, after the latter went into politics, she put away such feminine things as a delight in dress. But her sister, Lady Algernon Lennox, did not relinquish such gracious enhancements and always could be relied upon to make a great success of any dress we designed for her.

But in the matter of faithfulness, the accolade must be accorded Madame De Candamo, whom we have dressed uninterruptedly for more than sixty years. Some time ago she came to me and said, "Do you know, Mr. Worth, that this year my husband and I are going to celebrate our golden wedding?" And I answered, "So will we, for you have been coming to us now for

fifty years." And she still comes to us! Only last year her husband selected the furs from which we made her a most beautiful coat. Although she is tiny, her air and taste always make her conspicuous. There was never anything spurious in anything she wore. For example, in her pearl necklace, bought many years ago, there was not a defective pearl, and that at the time when pearls were submitted to no polishing, no whitening, and no skinning, as they are to-day, but had to be born perfect.

Next to Madame De Candamo the Marquise de Jaucourt, one of the great ladies of the Second Empire, was our oldest customer. I have one picture of her in a Worth gown made in 1866 and another in a costume worn in 1912 at the second Empire Ball given by the Princess Jacqueline Murat. The gown of the second photograph was copied from the favorite dress of the Empress Eugénie, and for all of her seventy years, the Marquise de Jaucourt was one of the loveliest women at the ball. Until the day of her death, she was a miracle of youth. I remember making her princess dresses, which she tried on over stays, but which her firm, eternally young figure permitted her to wear without any support. She was somewhat original, and one day amused herself by appearing in a yellow dress trimmed with tournesols or giant sunflowers.

A woman for whom it delighted me to design frocks was the possessor of one of the greatest titles in France, that of the Duchesse Doudeauville. Her husband, the Count de Rochefoucauld, Duc of Bisaccia, who inherited the title, was ambassador to London after the War of 1870 and played an important part there. She came to us chiefly for her gala dresses which were always made with an eye to her wonderful jewels. For example, a plain black velvet dress would serve to display five rows of diamonds worn at the opera. Her daughter-in-law, who succeeded her as the owner of this great French title, went in for the same simplicity of attire and beautiful jewels - rubies, diamonds and emeralds, worthy of a queen. Last year, when she went to Madrid to attend the wedding of her son to a very pretty Madrilene there, I made the dress for her private audience with the king and queen, of white panne velvet trimmed with white fur and with a long train. One of her daughters married the Prince Sixte de Bourbon and it was for her that I designed the long veil falling from a diadem to the end of the train, which has since become so popular with brides. Her other daughter married the Duc de Morny, a grandson of the Duc de Morny who married Princesse Anna Murat, of whom we have spoken previously.

One of the first fashions I originated was the spangled dress. It was copied more or less from a picture of the Empress Josephine at the Louvre, and was made of a pretty French crêpe — there was no chiffon at the time - covered with small paillettes of silver. I showed it to several of my clientele and a number of them ordered it; but the next day one repented and came to me and said, "Don't make up that spangled dress. It is too bizarre." Forty years ago women shrank from novelty and always feared the Qu'en dira-t-on. (But what will people say!) However, a spangled dress was ultimately made for a Spanish marchioness and for a Russian princess, of a pearl-gray material and white satin and though the women who saw it declared they "could not wear it", in time they succumbed to its fascination and it became la mode.

Another dress inspired by the Empire which had a great vogue was made in tulle over a tight-fitting princess slip. One of my competitors went so far as to persuade her best customer to come to me and buy it in order that she might have the original Worth princess gown in her shop to copy.

Of the five Spanish queens who honored us with their patronage, the one with whom I came in personal contact was the last, Queen Victoria, cousin of the

King of England. It is her habit, when passing through Paris, always to come to our house in the Rue de la Paix, whether she wishes to order anything or not. She is that rare thing, a queen who looks the part. Beautiful, tall, fair, with golden hair, a translucent skin and a charming smile, she is a most lovable creature, and so kind and gracious that one is never overwhelmed by her rank. Nothing could exceed her sweetness.

Once she came to our shop and said, "I did n't come to order anything to-day, as I gave my order to Miss X - her vendeuse - three weeks ago, but only came to say 'Good morning' and at the same time to tell you how pleased I am with my new frocks. They are perfectly enchanting." Her wedding dress, ordered by the Empress Eugénie, was made in England, of course, as the Princess of Battenberg would not hear to its being made anywhere but in her own country, which was quite natural. But since then, having been surrounded by our clients, Queen Victoria has always come to us and each year she gives us an important order, apologizing the while for not making it larger. Politics obviously compel her to buy part of her wardrobe in Madrid. Often, however, the gowns she purchases in Spain are our models imported by Madrid dressmakers.

Let us speak for the moment of something other than

clothes, for I want to tell you how charming and kind a queen can be. During the last war, that terrible cataclysm that held the world so many disastrous years, one of my nephews was made a prisoner. After he had been imprisoned for three years, I heard that he might be interned in Switzerland. Knowing what it would mean to him to see his wife and three children after those dreadful years, I wrote the ladies in waiting of Queen Victoria and the Queen Mother Christine, and asked them if it would be possible for their majesties, through their embassy, to say some word that would give my nephew the privilege of living in the house which I owned in Switzerland. They acted immediately, discreetly, and as though this great favor was a matter of course, so that when my nephew arrived in Switzerland he found his family waiting for him. After that, I felt that I must go to San Sebastian, where I had established temporary quarters in order to take care of the Spanish clients who could not come to France, and try to express my gratitude to their majesties. The same day that I asked for an audience I was received by Queen Victoria and the Queen Mother within twenty minutes of each other. When I reached Queen Christine's boudoir she exclaimed, "At last, here you are, Mr. Worth," for though I had

made her wedding dress I had never met her. She was affability itself. She told me her age without the least coquetry and asked mine; told me if I needed anything for the soldiers, for whom she knew I was doing quite a bit at the time, she would be most glad to send me anything that might be difficult to obtain in Paris. When I left her I was taken to Queen Victoria, who graciously received me standing.

She was wearing white crêpe de chine, simply made, and trimmed with a touch of lace. A pearl necklace and a ruby brooch were her only jewels. I was awed by her graciousness, her fascination, her most winning smile and her sympathy, but not at all by her rank. She expressed the wish that peace might come soon — this was some time in September, 1918 — and that France might resume her place in the world.

Despite the fact that she always depreciates the size of her order, it is not one to be lightly scorned. Almost every year, she orders the manteau de cour to be worn at the great festa celebrating the king's birthday. These court mantles are particularly magnificent. Some have an all-over embroidery of diamonds, and all are of velvet — the color varying with the year — and lined with silver cloth. At the birthday procession these manteaux de cour are displayed with great effect. They

are allowed to fall full spread behind the queen and her ladies in waiting as they walk. Another occasion where they add to the gorgeousness of court ceremony is on Good Thursday, when the queen, incredibly regal and laden with jewels, goes through the rite of washing the feet of the poor. Good Thursday and the king's birthday are the two great festas of Spain.

Queen Victoria's daughters, although still very young, are already our clients. I had a little experience with them recently that throws an interesting side light upon the excellence of their upbringing. One day I observed two very young girls, one almost a child, with a remarkably fair complexion, sitting on a divan in one of the salons, and thinking they resembled the Infantas whose photographs I had seen at San Sebastian, I asked their *vendeuse* who they might be. When she verified my conjecture, I went over and spoke to them, and at my approach they both rose to greet me and during our chat remaining standing. It was a touching mark of respect to an old man, and proved that they had been taught the reverence for age that has nothing to do with rank.

Their grandmother, the Queen Mother Christine, formerly Archduchess Marie Christine and second wife of Alphonse XII, became one of our clientele at the

[198]



LADY CURZON, NÉE LEITER, ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN OF THE TIME

About 1900



LADY PAGET IN A TEAGOWN
About 1900

time of her marriage, and since then has not ceased to be charming and loyal. I remember distinctly the first court train I ever made for her. It was about four meters long, of black velvet embroidered in silver fleur-de-lis, and with a scalloped edge. Up to that time court trains had always been fastened at the waist, but in designing this one I conceived the idea of adding two velvet sleeves, embroidered with the same design as the train, and draping the whole from the shoulders. Queen Christine was so pleased with the innovation that she adopted it, and all her subsequent trains were made to hang from the shoulders. She had, her ladies in waiting, however, retain the older mode, in which the train began at the waistline.

The dress which I made for her to wear with this new court train was of black satin trimmed with Chantilly and embroidered in silver. She wore it at the reception where she sat next to the king for the first time as Queen Regent. Her wedding dress was a commission given to us by her mother-in-law, Queen Isabella, through the Duchesse de Sesto, formerly the Duchesse de Morny. It was of white satin, embroidered in silver, and trimmed with Alençon, into which an orange-blossom wreath had been worked. It had a court train four and a half meters long, with an all-over

embroidery of fleur-de-lis. As a sufficient yardage of the same pattern of lace could not be found, we had to use two varieties. That was not unusual then. Even the marriage dress of the Empress Eugénie was made with three flounces of Alençon of three distinct patterns.

We also made the first manteau de cour of Queen Christine's predecessor, Queen Mercedes, the first wife of Alphonse XII, which was presented to her by her mother-in-law (Isabella). The dress of this was of white satin embroidered in silver, and the four and a half meter train was of red velvet trimmed with ermine and embroidered with the Arms of Leon and Castile—a tower and a lion—in gold. Along with this manteau, we made one for Isabella with a court train in bleu de France worked with gold fleur-de-lis. Queen Mercedes died shortly after her marriage.

Isabella, the mother-in-law of Mercedes and Christine, was the second of the five Spanish queens to come to us. The first was the elder Queen Christine, whom we served during her banishment in Paris. It was, unfortunately, only for a short time, as she died not long after she was exiled. Isabella, however, was one of our very good clients even before her exile. She used to come to our shop in the Rue de la Paix when-

ever it pleased her, and the royal reception accorded her there always put her in a high good humor. Physically she was a big woman inclined to ungainliness, but notwithstanding her apparently unwieldly body, her carriage was stately and her manner regal. She adored clothes and had a passion for the deeper shades of pink. Until the day of her death, she used to exclaim to my father, "But I love rose color!" only she always pronounced it "ross." When she chose to be, she was most gracious. She never left our shop without first inquiring about my mother and my brother and myself, and our fitters never went to the Palais de Castille to try on any of her frocks without her telling them to be sure to "remember her to Monsieur Worth."

She did not, however, always choose to be kind. Once I witnessed her refuse an audience to a certain Spanish noblewoman who for some reason was in Her Majesty's high disfavor. It was an admirable illustration of royal displeasure. She drew herself up and thundered a "No" at the ambassadress of the supplicant that sent that poor creature scuttling away like a scared rabbit.

In Portugal, the House of Worth has served two queens. The first was Maria Pia, the daughter of Victor Emmanuel, who left with us the memory of a

great lady, very lavish and regal. She was not beautiful, but she had stateliness. Her profile indicated great strength of character and was a little forbidding. However, she was very simple and gracious, for all one's first impression might be to the contrary. Nothing was ever too beautiful, too luxurious, or too expensive for Maria Pia; and after she was widowed she used to come very frequently to the Rue de la Paix, and it goes without saying that she was a pleasant and highly profitable customer.

Her successor, Queen Amelie, never actually became one of our clientele. At the time of her marriage, her trousseau was distributed among all the big Paris firms. Her mother, the Duchess of Galiera, a most intimate friend of the Comtesse de Paris, brought her to us. At this one and only visit the Comtesse de Paris ordered for her a very beautiful court train in sherry velvet, lined with pink satin, to be worn over a white satin gown, and a very lovely evening wrap. This order terminated our business relations with the Court of Portugal, which not long thereafter was disbanded.

Queen Mary is one sovereign whom I have seen only at a distance. As a rule her appearance is rather bourgeois; but I remember seeing her coming from the opera once — in 1912, I believe it was — when she appeared

[202]

every inch a queen. Another time when she was at her best was the day she drove through the Rue de la Paix with Madame Poincaré. She was wearing a red coat of some Indian material embroidered with gold and a hat with the inevitable feathers. Word of her passing had created a great stir in our House, and in anticipation I had had sacks filled with paper rose petals distributed to our employes. The latter were stationed in every window on every floor of our House, and the moment that Her Majesty appeared, they showered these petals upon her. The wind caught them as they fell and in a moment there was a rosy cloud higher than the Column Vendôme. It was really rather charming.

Although Queen Mary dislikes novelties, she must be credited with one dress reform, and this was issuing a decree curtailing the length of the trains required for presentations by court etiquette. It is said that she did this to shorten the "defiles" which had become tedious, and naturally the shorter the trains the quicker the movement of the procession.

In Germany we were *couturiers* to the old Empress Augusta, wife of Wilhelm I, by proxy. That is, we sold to the Berlin dressmakers, who in turn sold to Her Majesty. Her taste inclined to all things magnificent, and she was always very richly dressed. Princess

[203]

Victoria of Prussia, who succeeded her, became a client of ours before her accession to the throne, and we always made a few dresses for her each year, which were sometimes sold to her directly and sometimes indirectly.

Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, never came to Paris, but nevertheless ordered three or four dresses every vear from us. Clothes meant little to her. She affected the greatest simplicity, and wore mostly white, pearl gray, or very, very pale violet. The Viennese dressmakers always saw to it that they had at least one beautiful dress made to her measurements always in readiness. The wife of King Leopold I of Belgium was another sovereign whom we served indirectly; but her successor, the beloved Queen Elizabeth, never fails to come and see us when she is in Paris. Although she is a woman of sound convictions, to which she adheres with quiet dignity, she is modest, unassuming and amiable. She is also, deliciously enough, rather shy, and I have seen her blush like a young girl when I presented her with a little spray of orchids tied with the Belgian colors. Once or twice a year we take a number of dresses to her at Brussels. The last time we went, we made a very beautiful manteau de cour for her.

The only queen of Sweden we served was the wife [204]

of Gustave, who reigned around '64 or '65. This sovereign ordered a few dresses from us to please my father's partner, Mr. Boberg, who was Swedish and who had maintained his connections with the Swedish court. However, the rulers of that advanced little country are not given to elaborate wardrobes. Simplicity rules at court and royal pomp is practically unknown. Then, owing to her ties with the imperial family of Germany, Queen Sophia never cared to patronize a French firm, but her mother-in-law, Queen Olga, the daughter of the Grand Duchess Constantine, who was a loyal patroness of ours, used to send us an order from time to time.

Our sole client in Italy was Queen Marguerite, who died the winter of 1925-1926. She was very loyal to us from the beginning, and we sent her a number of charming frocks, directly or indirectly, every year. Our relationship with her was always one of the most pleasant, although it was marked by an amusing contretemps that took place through no fault of ours. We had made a dress for her to wear upon one of her visits to Russia, and when she came to put it on, her maid—I don't know how—quite forgot to remove a strip of paper on which was written in big letters, "Worth, 7 Rue de la Paix, to Her Majesty the Queen of Italy,

blue satin embroidered in pearls and silver", a device always fastened on dresses to enable the packer to verify the shipment. When Her Majesty came into the room, Emperor Alexander II gave her one look and then exclaimed, "What's this? Are you a walking advertisement for the House of Worth?" Queen Marguerite glanced down, saw the legend, and laughed with the others until she wept, and declared that at least it was proof that the gown was new.

Once she asked me to try to place the Murano laces, of which she was the patroness, and I was fortunate enough to be able to dispose of several very large orders to the Italian aristocrats who came to our House. Political events, the change in fashions — which made the use of the Murano lace impossible — later severed our relations. Her successor, I understand, cares little for clothes, and we have never seen her.

One of the most difficult sovereigns to dress was the Empress of Japan. The Nipponese Protocol, which may have been changed since, was very strict in the eighties. Certain parts of the body had to be covered, and no bodice could be décolleté. Price, however, never bothered them. I recall one envoy entrusted with the mission of buying Her Majesty a set of sables, who insisted upon my assurance that they were "the best



MRS. C.... IN A FANCY COSTUME



that could be had." I told him that they were splendid, among the finest I had ever seen, but that I could not swear they were the best to be had, whereupon he became much exercised and insisted that he have "the best." Another time the Japanese ambassador asked me to make a court mantle dress of material manufactured according to French processes and designs in Japan. He specified no price limit, so I trimmed it with sable tails, and Her Majesty expressed herself as completely satisfied.

It was only natural when we served the sovereigns of their countries that we should serve those a degree less royal. Along with the Duchess of Medina-Celi, the Terrible Duchess, of Madrid, of whom I have spoken, the Duchess d'Alba, a sister of the Empress Eugénie, was one of the most important of our Spanish clientele. She died, however, quite young, and her son married the daughter of the Duchess de Fernon Nunez of the Spanish nobility. This last-named Spanish noblewoman had the typical prominent lower lip of the Hapsburgs and could not be called pretty, but she had dash and personality, and these, combined with the fact that her son-in-law was the Duke d'Alba, made her a person with whom to reckon at court.

One of our flag bearers in Madrid was the Countess

de Villa Gonzalo, now the Marquise de Balbe Olmoz. She came to us, as I recall, about forty years ago for her wedding dress, and each year we have the pleasure of receiving an order from her. Like the Duchesse de Metternich, she has the ability to "set the fashion", and when she appears at the races in a new frock it automatically becomes la mode. She was married on the same day as her sister, the Terrible Duchess, and never in all Spain had there been anything so tremendous as this double ceremony. These two famous belles of Madrid were dressed for this great hour respectively by my father and by myself, my father designing the gown for the future duchess and I the one for the future countess. At the time of this wedding it was the custom in Spain for fiancés to present their brides with their trousseaus, including the wedding dress, a dinner dress, a dress for the signature of the contract, a black dress and a traveling costume or cloak. An interesting part of this custom was that which required that all formal dresses be trimmed with real lace or fur. For instance, the wedding dress with Alençon, the contract dress with Malines or Valenciennes and the dinner dress with fur. This graceful gesture is rapidly being abandoned, although the bridegroom still presents his bride with the wedding dress and veil.

One of the loveliest of these Spanish wedding dresses I made just after the war for Mademoiselle Iturvi, who married a Czecho-Slovakian prince by the name of Hohenlohe. It had the first veil bound tightly about the face after the fashion of the headdress of a medieval nun — béguine — and the wreath that held it was of diamonds. The virginal effect was further enhanced by a skirt that touched the ground instead of the knees, as is the fashion, and sleeves that ended in a point at her fingers. Her Majesty Queen Victoria was kind enough to tell me that in all her life she had never seen a lovelier bride in a costume more bridelike.

Among the Italian aristocracy Madame Minghetti, a close friend of Queen Marguerite, was perhaps the most important of our clientele. Later we had the beautiful Donna Franca Florio, whose position enabled her to indulge her love for splendid clothes. She had a definite instinct for the gown that would accent her distinction. I recall her wearing a quite plain white dress of stamped velvet at the christening of an imperial prince, where all the other ladies in waiting appeared in gowns ornately embroidered. The very simplicity and beauty of line of her dress contrived to cheapen the others and make them seem fussy. Her sister in-law,

the Princess Trabia, was equally charming, but of a quite different type, adorable and sweet.

In Russia one of the most loyal adherents of the House of Worth was the morganatic wife of Alexander II, Mademoiselle Youriwitch, lady in waiting to the czarina, who bore the czar several children and whom he married immediately after the death of the czarina. This marriage, of course, was not recognized officially and in no way changed Mademoiselle Youriwitch's former title.

Three other Russian women who meant much to us were the old Princess Bariatinski, wife of the Court Marshal, first in precedence after the czarina and the Grand Duchess Marie, and her two daughters. Princess Bariatinski used to order twelve ball dresses apiece for these two girls, the eldest and most extravagant of whom was the Countess Paul Chouvaloff. Four of these robes de soirée were quite simple, four a bit more elaborate, and four of the utmost magnificence and for great occasions only. To this order for twenty-four ball gowns, she would add some fifteen dresses and cloaks for herself. She adhered to the old fashion of wearing a lace scarf about her bare shoulders in the evening. When she went to the supper room, where it was often cold, she would add a sort of mantilla of feathers to

this. Then, as the evening waned, over the lace and feather shawls she would put a wrap embroidered in gold and silver, and at last when she came to leave in her sleigh or carriage, she would don a great cloak of dark velvet lined with sable or fox or chinchilla, totaling four wraps in all.

Her daughter, the Countess Sophia Chouvaloff, who married Count Beckendorff, ambassador to London, was quite as lavish as the old princess. Her trousseau included thirty coats, fifteen summer dresses, fifteen winter dresses and a magnificent manteau de cour. All formal dresses were trimmed with real lace. However, such orders were quite the custom among the elder Russian aristocrats, who had been set the example of extravagance by the most magnificent court in the world.

Mention should be made of the Princess Orloff, the Madame de Metternich of Russia, whose husband owned a splendid house in Paris in the vicinity of the Rue de la Varenne; of the Grand Duchess Vladimir, whose husband took such keen enjoyment in ordering dresses for his wife; of the Grand Duchess Serge; and of Madame Dournow, for whom we made a Bellona costume so bejeweled that having no room left on her shoulders she had to bedeck her shield with precious

stones. Then we must not forget the Princess Obolenski, Countess Davidoff, Marie Scherbaloff and Madame Baskewitch Polovtzoff, all of whom dressed magnificently.

Incidentally, there was a legend about the latter. It was rumored that she was left on the doorstep of one of the wealthiest of the Russian aristocrats, Baron Stiglich. According to the story, a footman found the child when he went to answer a ring of the bell. As it was a belief in Russia at that time that such a foundling might easily be of imperial blood, they were always cherished with the greatest tenderness, and the baron and his wife immediately adopted the waif and made her heiress to their enormous wealth. Bearing out the legend physically, Madame Polovtzoff reminded one a little of the great Catherine. She affected simplicity, but it was of the priceless variety. Her coat was lined, for example, with the most marvelous sables I have ever seen. It would be impossible to-day to buy such a lining even for three hundred thousand or four hundred thousand pre-war francs and even at that time and in Russia such skins brought eight hundred to a thousand francs apiece. And remember that was for a few inches of fur to be used as a lining.

Once she ordered a manteau de cour that she desig-



PRINCESS PALEY, WIDOW OF GRAND DUKE PAUL,
OF RUSSIA, IN A DINNER DRESS WITH FANCY
HEADDRESS, 1912



About 1900

nated must be matchless, but in no way conspicuous. It was made of a splendid material the color of copper medlars, and it was embroidered with gold and silver and steel after the fashion of Louis XIV. It may be recalled that, in describing an official costume to be worn with such a court train, I mentioned that it must be buttoned from throat to hem. The court dress I made for Madame Polovtzoff to wear with her "copper" mantle was buttoned with enormous diamonds. Although she could not be said to be exactly beautiful, this great lady was a lover of all that was beautiful. She was a patroness of the fine arts and had a great reputation in Russia for her taste in objets d'arts; her home was famous for its magnificent tapestries. This house was bought later by the Grand Duke Paul, who married morganatically the Princess Paley about 1910. As this marriage was greatly frowned upon by the Russian court, the Princess Paley remained in Paris for some time after its occurrence, but at the time of the war and even before, the czar recalled his uncle and Madame Paley was presented at court as the Countess Hohenfelsen, a title which had been bestowed upon her by the Kaiser. After the war she gave up this title on account of its German origin and again was known as the Princess Paley, a title dependent upon the Rus-

sian crown. The tragedy which made a recluse of this charming and affable lady is so well known that it scarcely needs repetition here. Her husband, the Grand Duke, and her son were murdered by the Bolshevists on the very day she had been assured they had been granted amnesty and were coming home. Ever since then she has worn mourning, and lives only for her two daughters, the Grand Duchess Georges and the Princess Paley, both unmarried.



THE AMBITION OF JEAN PHILIPPE WORTH



To MY mind, the greatest aristocrat was one not of noble birth, but of royal soul, Eleonora Duse. The Princess Wolckenstein, the wife of the Austrian ambassador, brought her to us, and the vendeuse who always attended the princess also took care of Madame Duse. It was not until her second or third visit that I introduced myself, and then I did so only because a question had arisen connected with her début in "La Dame aux Camélias" in Paris. She had said that she never wore jewels and had none with her. I protested, "But, Madame, in Paris you must wear jewels in this play, for we French could not imagine 'La Dame aux Camélias' without jewels. We must see some material evidence that Marguerite Gauthier was richly provided for." And so I lent her a pearl necklace valued then at about thirty thousand or forty thousand francs.

"Take it," I said, "and you will find it will be most useful when you come on." The next day she came to me and thanked me and told me that my words had been truly prophetic. In her emotion and her nervousness, she had held on to that necklace as to salvation!

Every one has seen La Duse or has heard endless stories about her. Therefore it would be superfluous for me to undertake here any analysis of her art or any biographical sketch. I must confess, however, that I had feared failure for her at her début. I had thought that being an Italian she would gesticulate and shout. But from the moment she came on the stage she was a revelation. There are no words to convey the simplicity, the naturalness, or the charm of her acting. She could turn pale or crimson, assume beauty or homeliness at will.

I never got over being astounded at the expressiveness she could lend even to her garments. She was the great animator. Once I went to see her in London in "La Dame aux Camélias." A new dress with a decided décolleté had just been sent her by us, and when I went to see her she mentioned it and said, "But, Mr. Worth, I shall never dare to go on the stage in such a dress." So I sent for a length of tulle and gave it to her. I said, "This will express your fear of drafts, will indicate that you are delicate or consumptive." I cannot begin to tell



ELEANORA DUSE



LADY WYNDHAM (MARY MOORE) IN A VAN DYCK COSTUME FOR "CYRANO DE BERGERAC"

you in how many ways she made that fragile stuff speak for her. When Armand Duval insulted her, flung the bank notes in her face, she draped herself with it as if to protect herself against him. A minute detail, but one that showed the great artist, who with very simple means creates a masterpiece.

We became excellent friends, and when she came to Paris for the second time and I found that the years had played havoc, as they will, with her appearance, I took infinite pains to help her overcome this tragic work of time. I persuaded her to wear a wig, showed her how to make up her face, and at last I gave her a magnifying mirror, a twin to the one I owned myself. When she saw herself in that tell-tale glass she exclaimed, "Heavens-take it away!" "No," I said, "keep it. It's a friend, and it will always tell you the truth." After that, I believe she came to regard me as her counselor as well as her trusted friend, for even when she needed nothing she would come to me for encouragement and comfort. I told her frankly, to the best of my ability, of all in which she excelled and all in which she failed. From the day that she first came to our House I made all of her stage costumes. She had the rare trick of making you see exactly what she wanted. Perhaps she would lead you to a window and pointing to a tree

whose leaves were just turning would say, "I want a dress of that shade of brown"; or going to a vase, she would pull therefrom a rose and say, "Make me a frock the color of that."

Before she left for America on her last tour, she came to me, and I was appalled and grieved to see how terribly changed she was and how ailing, and when I heard of her death, my emotion was divided between shock and relief that her troubles were over.

Another artist who has been and always will be discussed is Madame Ida Rubenstein. Madame Rubenstein first appeared before the war-I think it was in 1912—as a mime. She was one of the first to play Cleopatra barelegged. Later she created Scheherazade. The very elaborate costume she wore in this pantomime was designed by Bakst and rather difficult to dance in, but she managed it with infinite grace. Except for Scheherazade, I made all her costumes — those for Pisanella, Hélène de Sparte and Shakespeare's Cleopatra, in all of which she was magnificent. About two years ago she had a great success in "La Dame aux Camélias", which she staged entirely herself and at her own expense. I have never received so many extravagant compliments as those accorded the Second Empire dresses I designed for this revival. It is interesting

A CENTURY OF FASHION

to note that the phrase predominant in these eulogies was, "How much more graceful the dresses were then than they are to-day."

Madame Rubenstein duplicated her enormous Paris success as Marguerite Gauthier in Brussels. city people fought to obtain chairs in the aisles. It must be admitted that her talent is of a peculiar order, and not to be understood by every one. However, her gestures and attitudes have infinite expression. Her "La-mort-du-Cigne" of Saint-Saëns is perfection, and not long ago I saw her do "Istar", a symbolical play, incomparably. In this her only medium of expression was the dance, and to express certain phases of emotion she abandoned her garments one by one until in the last scene she appeared regenerated, despoiled of all worldliness, according to the text, "purified by love" and — quite nude. And yet such was the magnitude of her plastic art that, even as in Memling's pictures, one saw only beauty and purity.

Later she produced Dostoyevsky's interesting play "The Idiot" at the Vaudeville. The period of this play is about 1875, when bustles were the fashion. And again this remarkable woman made people see only the beautiful where they might so easily have seen the ridiculous. She appeared in a splendid red velvet gown

that was quite plain, rather long, and trimmed with sables. With it she wore a tiny impayan toque with two long feathers, a great coat or *shupa* such as was worn for sleighing in Russia, made of black satin quilted to the knee, lined with fur and trimmed with silver fox. Only a superwoman could have been impressive in such a padded costume.

Another great creator of illusion is Mary Garden, the adored Melisande of Paris. Miss Garden's chief advantage over all other singers is her peculiar histrionic gift, her ability to make the characters she portrays live. One day, when she came with one of her friends to our shop in the Rue de la Paix, I could not refrain from telling her this, and saying that the best proof I had to offer of the verity of my admiration was that I stood ready to make her a costume at any time and on her own terms. Those she wore in "Romeo and Juliet" were the result of this offer. As I did not want her to go to excessive expense, I told her to wear the wedding dress of the penultimate act for the last. To this I added, to change its aspect, a shroud of a very soft chiffon in which she was to be swathed as in a mummy's band.

When discussing this shroud with her, I suggested that Romeo should lift the veil when he bends over her

[220]



A costume made of a net of diamonds, glittering silver fringe, a gold feather sun against a diamond tiara and embroidered diamond stars



NELLIE MELBA
1904

for his farewell and exclaims, "How beautiful she is." Strangely enough, this had never been done, absurd though it was for Romeo to exclaim at Juliet's beauty without lifting the veil. As Miss Garden did it, the scene was remarkable. She rose, the drapery clinging to her and floating behind her as she descended from the bier, singing and moving like a woman dazed by a narcotic.

The most amazing thing to me about Miss Garden is the vastness of her comprehension of the many varieties of human soul. It would seem that her incomparable Juliet should be enough for any actress, but to that interpretation she has added Melisande, La Jongleur, Thais, Monna Vanna, and Louise. A few years ago I made her costumes for "La Gioconda."

Miss Garden is only one of the many delightful Americans who have been loyal to the House of Worth. I have heard it said facetiously that all a competitor who wishes to possess a list of our American customers need do is to buy a Social Register and add thereto one half the feminine population of the United States — a charming exaggeration, but one nevertheless that has a great grain of truth in it.

But of all our Americans it is the family of Morgan that has meant everything to the Maison Worth. In

the first place, Junius Spencer Morgan and his wife were devoted to my father long before Worth père was celebrated. I can remember their taking tea at our country place when I was still quite a child. That generation was followed by the one headed by John Pierpont Morgan, who was for me the great Morgan. There are no words that can express my devotion to him and his family. They never considered me just as a fournisseur, and I never thought of them as merely clients. Mr. Morgan, "J. P. Morgan", as he was usually called, had a passion for beautiful things and often came to our shop to look at some rare new stuff my father had had manufactured, or to buy dresses for his wife or his children.

When my father was still alive I came in contact with him very little personally, but a few months after my father's death, about which he had sent me a most wonderful letter, I heard that John Pierpont Morgan was in Paris. I immediately sent one of our saleswomen who knew him to tell him that the House of Worth was carrying on the best it could. He told my messenger, "I can never go into that house again." When she returned and delivered his answer, I wrote him that I understood, that I knew my father could never be

A CENTURY OF FASHION CO

replaced, but I felt sure that he would want to see a very unusual portrait of him which I had had placed in his old office. He came at that and stood a long time before this portrait, which always seems about to speak. Then he turned with tears in his eyes and said, "He was like a brother to me," and rushed from the room like a madman.

Later in the afternoon he returned with Mrs. Lanier and two other ladies and said abruptly, "I have come to look at that portrait again." The ice was broken now, and he spoke at length about my father, saying that such genius could never be replaced. The next day he came again, and this time he said to me, "Show me what you have that is new," and from that day he became as faithful and devoted to me as he had been to my father.

He could never understand any woman being dressed by any other *couturier*. His wife, shy, quiet and timid, with no desire for display except as it pleased her husband, would never have come to us of her own volition, I am certain. But John Pierpont used to bring her and then stand over her and say, "You must have this and that and that and this." There was never anything too beautiful or too good for J. P. Morgan. In 1910 a dress

that had been made more for the Exposition than to be worn, caught his fancy and he immediately had it duplicated for his wife at the cost of about eight thousand francs, which would be well over fifty thousand francs to-day. She wore it, I believe, only once.

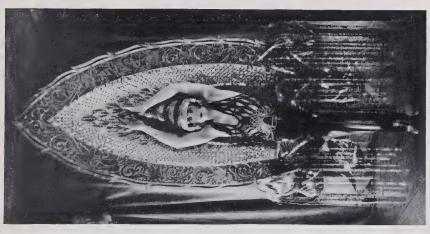
Again he ordered for his daughter a velvet dress in navy blue, and the young lady decided at a fitting that the color against her skin was rather trying. I told her this defect was easily remedied, and took a piece of beautiful point de Venise lace and draped it about her shoulders. The effect was quite lovely, and Miss Morgan declared herself enchanted. "But how much is it?" she asked, and I answered, "Twenty-two thousand francs." "Oh, take it away," she exclaimed. I smiled. "But it is not necessary for us to use such a costly lace. An imitation would look quite as well," and I sent for an imitation to replace the real.

Mr. Morgan, who had been silent during this passage, suddenly asked in his harsh manner, "What's the difference? Is there any real difference?" And I retorted, "No more difference than between a real pearl and a false one." He decided, "Then we'll have the real one. Take the imitation away."

In my drawing-room there is a beautiful antique Persian gun, inlaid with gold and silver and turquoises,



PIERRETTE Fancy dress



DEESSE HINDOO Fancy dress



LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR Fancy dress

Miss Pearl White posed for these three photographs







MRS. JAMES BROWN POTTER IN "LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS"

MRS. HOOKER AS "LA LIBERTÉ ÉCLAIRANT LE MONDE"

MLLE. MARNAC, A VERY SUCCESSFUL ACTRESS, IN ROMAN COSTUME

which many of my visitors declare they covet. It was one of John Pierpont Morgan's gifts to me. We happened to be in Cairo together at one time, and one day he said to me, "Come up to my room and see what I have bought." I followed him and examined his newly collected treasures with interest. Then I said to him, "Now you come and see what I have bought." So we went down to my room, where I had a beautiful little head of black and white and gold, an extraordinary piece of a kind I had never seen in any museum, and a gun which I was considering. The latter was too expensive for me, and I showed it to Mr. Morgan and asked him if he would care to have it. He said, "How much is it?" I told him, and he decided, "I'll take it, if you can make them come down to thus and so." The next day I submitted Mr. Morgan's price to the dealer, and he accepted it. When I told Mr. Morgan that I had concluded the deal for him, he said, "Good. Now take the gun and put it in your collection as a souvenir from me in remembrance of your father."

The gift was so generous that I was abashed, but, knowing the temper of the man, dared not refuse. But a few days later when I ran across a curious little thing, a small China eye, perhaps four thousand years old, I bought it and took it to Paris, where I had a very lovely

case made in the Egyptian style. I sent the eye to Mr. Morgan with a little note in which I said that since I had accepted the gun he gave me without protest at the costly gift, he must accept this small souvenir from me, if only to bring him luck.

Afterward his sister and all his friends told me that he was like a child with a new toy. He carried the eye about in his pocket and he greeted all acquaintances with, "Look here. I have something to show you," and taking the case from his pocket he would open it and say, "Just look what Worth sent me the other day."

When my daughter became engaged to Cartier he sent for the lad and bought fifty thousand dollars' worth of jewels from him, saying, "I shall always be pleased to receive the grandson of Monsieur Worth." Another bit of evidence to show how real the memory of my father was to him.

For the most part John Pierpont Morgan's attitude toward my father and myself was typical of the good will and fellowship that existed between all who came to the shop in the Rue de la Paix and the House of Worth. Graciousness, true courtesy of the heart, thoughtfulness, consideration, generosity, seem to be the habit among those who occupy the high places of

the earth. There are very few in my books about whom I cannot say it was a pleasure to meet them, and of those few I must admit that to-day I cannot recall either their names or their specific exhibitions of ill-breeding.

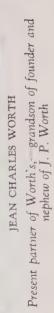
My brother and I used to comment frequently upon the fact that our ways for the most part had fallen in paths of pleasantness.

Gaston retired from the firm two years after the war. His place was taken by his two sons, Monsieurs Jean Charles Worth and Jacques Worth. Jacques took over the knotty problems of management and administration of finances, while Jean Charles, it seems, will follow in his grandfather's and my footsteps as designer for the House. My brother was one of the noncombatant casualties of the Great War. It broke him physically and nervously. In the first place, his two sons were at the Front during the entire conflict. One of his sons-in-law was made prisoner at Maubeuge and the other was killed after he had recovered from being wounded upon four separate occasions. The last years of my brother's life were torture. He could not bear to see any one, the slightest noise made him hysterical, and he was that most to be pitied of all invalids, the complete neurasthenic.

He died in 1922. Of the two of us, he was the only one to receive the Legion d'Honneur. Many people have asked me why this mark of distinction has not been bestowed upon me. To be perfectly truthful, when I was first asked to file an application for membership in this Order, I was greatly flattered. But then I remembered that my father, who had founded the House, who had really created the dressmaking industry as such, had never been accorded this honor, and I felt that I did not care to have it come to me because I was Worth the couturier. I felt that my success in business was reward enough. My brother had received his decoration not as a couturier, but because he had created the Chambre Syndicale, the Société de Secours Mutuel, had compiled endless statistics and written tedious reports and finally had been appointed President de Classe for the Exposition in 1900. The latter title alone would have won him the Legion d'Honneur, for in all the history of the exhibitions when a man becomes President de Classe, he automatically receives this famous decoration.

They came to me upon a second and, I must say, a third occasion, to ask me if I would not be willing to accept it, and my nephews quite insisted; but after the war I told them that I could not make up my mind to







JACQUES WORTH

Present partner of Worth's,—grandson of founder and nephew of J. P. Worth





wear the same decoration that was awarded our soldiers. I felt that it should be theirs alone. Then they tried to persuade me that I should accept it as a recognition of what I had done for the soldiers during the war. But how could I? In 1870 I was too young to fight and in 1914 I was too old. To help the poor soldiers was the only way I had of serving my country, and if a decoration be granted to those who only served their country there are at least three hundred thousand soldiers who should be given it before me. How could I face them in my ease, my comfort, when they returned blind or maimed with their little worldly possessions gone, if I had a decoration which they, who had given everything, had not received?

The other day I had three blind soldiers to luncheon. They had but one hand for the three of them. Can't you see how my possession of the highest honor France can bestow upon her citizens would have hurt them? In fact, one of them told me that although he felt that I more than merited the Legion d'Honneur, he loved me all the more for having refused it. I shall never accept it, unless I make the dream of my life come true. I have always wanted to establish a home for the blind; I now have almost enough money to do it. It would take too long to tell the details of my plan here, but it

includes schools where they may be taught to be selfsupporting, homes in which they may live for a nominal sum, and a retreat for their aged.

If I can see this plan become a reality of bricks and mortar instead of a blue print, before the Great Scene Shifter sees fit to lower the curtain he raised on the drama of my life some seventy years ago, then I shall feel that I have earned my Legion d'Honneur.

THE END







